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**Protection and reward: The significance of ancient midrashic
expositions on Genesis 15:1-6**

Cairus, Aecio Esteban, Ph.D.

Andrews University, 1989

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PROTECTION AND REWARD: THE SIGNIFICANCE
OF ANCIENT MIDRASHIC EXPOSITIONS
ON GENESIS 15:1-6

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Aecio E. Cairus
October 1988

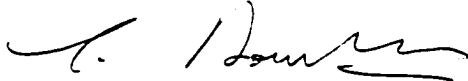
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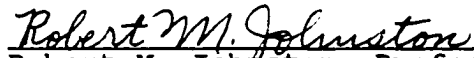
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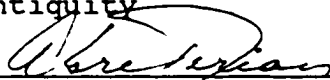
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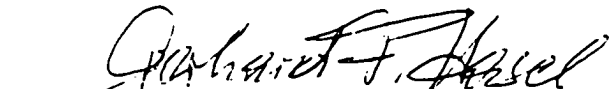
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ABSTRACT

PROTECTION AND REWARD: THE SIGNIFICANCE
OF ANCIENT MIDRASHIC EXPOSITIONS
ON GENESIS 15:1-6

by

Aecio E. Cairus

Faculty adviser: Jacques B. Doukhan

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Ph.D. Dissertation

Andrews University

Theological Seminary

Title: PROTECTION AND REWARD: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ANCIENT
MIDRASHIC EXPOSITIONS ON GENESIS 15:1-6

Researcher: Aecio E. Cairus

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Date completed: October 1988

Genesis 15:1-6, because of its content, provides singular opportunities for the study of ancient midrashic documents. This kind of study is being increasingly performed, and has interest from a theological, historical and--especially--exegetical viewpoint.

Chapter 1 attentively analyzes the treatment of the entire unit in midrashic documents (Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, Philo, Josephus, the Targumim, and Genesis Rabbah), identifies their individual theological and exegetical concerns, and shows their progression over time. The most ancient ones are found to emphasize the covenantal aspects of the passage, while later documents stress the eschatological reward of Abraham as a fruit of his good works.

Chapter 2 exegetes the unit by means of structural analysis, as well as historical and lexicographical research. The results confirm ancient insights on the covenantal character of the passage and on Abraham's faith as a reaction to the opening promises of protection rather than to the promise of offspring. The characteristics of ancient grant-covenants are employed to shed light on terms of theological significance in the unit, such as "protection," "reward," "offspring," "trust," and "righteousness."

A comparison with the gains of chapter 1 then shows how the ancient documents anticipated both the identification and the solution of several exegetical difficulties in the passage, including text, language and theology. These findings tend to substantiate recent recommendations to use ancient midrashim as valid interlocutors at each step in the exegetical tasks.

The progression, over time, of exegetical stances and theological ideas in those documents is shown to have implications for certain issues of the history of Judaism in current debate. The insights gained from the study of ancient midrashim and the historical setting of the unit contribute to a better grasp of its import. In redirecting the interpretation away from a doctrinaire attitude to one more historically determined, these insights are also able to lead scholars of different persuasions towards common grounds of understanding for the passage.

To my father, who taught me the
love of Scripture.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1QapGen	Genesis Apocryphon
Aeth	Ethiopic
<u>Ant.</u>	<u>Antiquitates Judaicae</u>
Ap Ab	Apocalypse of Abraham
Apos Con	Apostolic Constitutions
Arm	Armenian
AUSS	<u>Andrews University Seminary Studies</u>
b	as a prefix of Talmudic tractates: Babylonian
BASOR	<u>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</u>
BibSac	<u>Bibliotheca Sacra</u>
BN	<u>Biblische Notizen</u>
CAD	Oppenheim, A. L., et al., eds. <u>The Assyrian Dictionary</u> . Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956-
CBQ	<u>Catholic Bible Quarterly</u>
EstB	<u>Estudios Biblicos</u>
EvTh	<u>Evangelische Theologie</u>
F	PTg Nuremberg 1, Vatican 440, and Leipzig 1
FT	Fragmentary Targum (TJ II)
G	in the context of PTg: Cairo Genizah (HUC 1134) in the context of the text of Genesis: LXX
Gen. R.	Genesis Rabbah
HBT	<u>Horizons in Biblical Theology</u>

Heres	De Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit
HTR	<u>Harvard Theological Review</u>
HUCA	<u>Hebrew Union College Annual</u>
IB	<u>Interpreter's Bible</u>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	<u>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</u>
JAOS	<u>Journal of the American Oriental Society</u>
JBL	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
JJS	<u>Journal of Jewish Studies</u>
Jos.	Josephus
JQR	<u>Jewish Quarterly Review</u>
JSNT	<u>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</u>
JSOT	<u>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</u>
JSS	<u>Journal of Semitic Studies</u>
JTS	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>
Jub	Jubilees
m	as a prefix of Talmudic tractates: Mishnah
M	in the context of PTg: marginal glosses in the context of the text of Gen: Massoretic
N	Targum Neofiti
NTS	<u>New Testament Studies</u>
P	in the context of PTg: MS Paris 110 in the context of the text of Gen: Peshitta
Praem	De Praemiis
PsJ	Pseudo-Jonathan
PTg	Palestinian Targum
RB	<u>Revue Biblique</u>

RHistPHRel	<u>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses</u>
S	Samaritan Pentateuch
SEA	<u>Svensk Exegetisk Arsbok</u>
Sem	<u>Semitica</u>
STg	Samaritan Targum
T.	preceding Talmudic tractates: Tosephta
T Ab	Testament of Abraham
TDNT	Kittel, Gerhard and Friedrich Gerhard eds. <u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u> . 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-76.
TDOT	Botterweck, G. J., and H. Ringgren, eds. <u>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</u> . Trans. J. T. Willis. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974- . (English edition of TWAT)
TgO	Targum Onqelos
TWAT	Botterweck, G. J., H. Ringgren and H.-J. Fabry, eds. <u>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum alten</u> <u>Testament</u> , vol. 1-5 (edition still in progress). Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973-1986.
TWOT	Harris, R. L., G. L. Archer and B. K. Waltke, eds. <u>Theological Wordbook of the Old</u> <u>Testament</u> . Chicago: Moody Press, 1980.
V	Vulgate
VT	<u>Vetus Testamentum</u>
VT Sup	<u>Vetus Testamentum Supplement</u>
WTJ	<u>Westminster Theological Journal</u>
y	as a prefix of Talmudic tractates: Yerushalmi
ZAW	<u>Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>
ZNW	<u>Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>

INTRODUCTION

Problem Background

The study of traditional exegesis has been found recently on the rise.¹ New approaches such as semantic, rhetorical, structural, and stylistic analyses include a set of aims and attitudes related to insights that "were applied to Biblical traditions in the exegetical literature of Judaism, Christianity and Islam from as far back as our sources go."² For this reason, "in the last decades there has been much interest in the *Nachgeschichte* of biblical texts."³

Such research is important for current exegetical activity. Ancient exegesis, originating close to Old Testament times, may illumine the meaning of the text. Since it was elaborated in environments sociogeographically

¹J. F. A. Sawyer, "A Change of Emphasis in the Study of the Prophets," in R. Coggins, A. Phillips and M. Knibb, eds., Israel's Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter R. Ackroyd (London: Cambridge, 1982), pp. 233-49.

²Ibid., p. 234.

³Christopher T. Begg, "Rereading of the 'Animal Rite' of Gen 15 in Early Jewish Narratives," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 50 (1988): 36-46. With this rationale he proceeds to investigate the "afterlife" of Gen 15:9-10, 17 in Jubilees, Josephus, and other documents from around the turn of the era.

or linguistically similar to those of the texts themselves, and often as a prolongation of trends already present in them, it naturally enjoyed advantages that modern exegesis has to work hard to obtain for itself.¹

This kind of research also may have projections in historical fields. It is often said that Church history is the history of the interpretation of Scripture. Such a dictum implies that the history of both Judaism and Christianity is intimately related to Pentateuchal interpretation. The first centuries of our era are of great interest both to Judaism (as the Tannaitic period) and to Christianity (as the apostolic and early Church times).

Therefore, for the retrieval of exegetical insights of the past, ancient midrashim may have a wider interest than exegetical productions of later periods. Being close in time to the point from which Judaism and Christianity branch out, they could attract attention from all scholars interested in the Hebrew Bible from the viewpoint of both the history of religious ideas and the original meaning of the text. As such, they seem a fitting subject for academic research in Old Testament studies.

However, interpreters face several difficulties in this avenue of research. There is, e.g., a scarcity of

¹See G. Vermes, "Bible and Midrash: Early Old Testament Exegesis," in Post-Biblical Jewish Studies (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 59-91.

reliably ancient exegetical texts, and the Pentateuch is a highly complex document. In spite of these and other difficulties, it is possible to make a case for the usefulness of a cautious study of extant exegetical materials.¹

Problem Selection and Scope for Study

By a careful choice of a subject for study, it is possible to alleviate the scarcity of available materials alluded above, and at the same time select highly relevant issues for theological and historical consideration.

Some subjects in biblical literature, because of their religious weight, have been abundantly commented upon, even in not primarily exegetical works, since earliest times. This wealth of material may afford us enough evidence, including references in non-exegetical but

¹Targumim and Midrashim, though incorporated in a 19th century effort at ascertaining the ancient synagogal theology (as seen in the title of Ferdinand W. Weber, System der altsynagogalen palästinischen Theologie aus Targum, Midrasch und Talmud [1880], which was changed later to Jüdische Theologie auf Grund des Talmud und verwandter Schriften [Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1897]), today are seen as problematic because of difficulties in dating. Whatever their real age, however, there is a good scholarly consensus around the fact that they do contain very ancient materials, though the antiquity of those materials must be established independently from their presence in Targum or Midrash. On the other hand, Hellenistic Jewish works, like those of Philo or Josephus, must be interpreted with careful reference to their provenance and special purposes, but they are well dated and may constitute good evidence about the existence of a given exegetical tradition.

firmly dated documents, to track the course of ancient exegesis on the subject.

One such subject is divine recompense:

It is so naturally presupposed in the very earliest O.T. testimonies, and it is so fruitful in historical and theological reflection, that it is obviously an ancient view current from the very outset in the thinking of Israel.¹

The first explicit mention of rewards in the Pentateuch comes at Gen 15:1.² Its relevance is underlined

¹E. Würthwein, "The Old Testament Belief in Recompense," in G. Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the N.T. (henceforward TDNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), art. *misthos*, 4:706.

²"Explicit mention" is here meant as distinct from narratives that, as those just mentioned by Würthwein, merely may be interpreted as a divine recompense. That Gen 15:1 is the first such mention remains true in spite of the multiplicity of Hebrew terms that are translated, at one passage or another, as "reward" or "recompense." A list coupled with passages where they are so translated follows:

·ah ^a rit	Prov 49:1	mattât	1 Kgs 13:7
·etnan, --h	Ezek 16:34	°eqeb	Ps 19:11
b°šorâh	2 Sam 4:10	p°c ^a ulâh	Ps 109:20
gml	2 Sam 19:36	šwb (Hiph.)	Ps 54:4
maš'at	Jer 40:5	(Hoph.)	Gen 43:12
maškoret	Ruth 2:12	šhd	Deut 10:17
		šlm, --h	1 Sam 24:19

Their first occurrences are:

·ah ^a rit	Gen 49:1	mattât	1 Kgs 13:7
·etnan, --h	Deut 23:19	°eqeb	Gen 22:18
b°šorâh	2 Sam 4:10	p°c ^a ulâh	Lev 19:13
gml	Gen 50:15	šwb (Hiph.)	Gen 20:7,
maš'at	Gen 43:34	(Hoph.)	Gen 43:12
maškoret	Gen 29:15	šohad	Exod 23:8
		šlm, --h	Gen 44:4

It will be observed that no reference comes before Gen 15:1. This kind of priority for the passage is valid also in RSV, BJ, and NAB, according to their concordances; respectively: Nelson's (New York, 1957), Cerf-Brepols

by the fact that it refers to a reward promised by God to man. Because of this priority of the passage, and the antiquity and importance of the subject impinged upon, an adequate supply of ancient exegetical material is available. Moreover, materials from around the turn of the era on this subject are especially interesting.¹

The theological context of the passage is attractive even beyond the ideas of reward. It so happens that Gen 15:1-6 is dear to the whole Judeo-Christian tradition for its soteriological content, and especially to western Christianity as a "remarkable anticipation of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith"² found in its closing sentence: "Abraham believed in the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (NIV). Just as a "reward" is mentioned for the first time in the canon at Gen 15:1, the ideas of "believing" and "accreditation of righteousness" appear for the first time in 15:6. Faith

(Paris and Turnhout, 1982) and Nelson's (Nashville, 1977). The only term preceding Gen 15:1 which may in some contexts (as, e.g., Ps 58:12) be understood as "reward" is *p^eri*, but the preceding occurrences (ch. 1, 3, 4) are unequivocal references to botanical, not metaphorical, fruits.

¹The diverse understanding of the soteriological value of obedience to God's law contributed to the rift between the early church and the synagogue. See, e.g., M. Simon, Verus Israel: Etude sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l'empire romain (Paris: de Boccard, 1964) esp. p. 196. The same was later true of the relationship between different Christian confessions.

²John Skinner, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1951), p. 280.

and imputed justification have elicited much of the best theological reflection through the centuries.

The history of the exegesis of this passage has been carefully studied by researchers. Among others, such history has been described by O. Kaiser for the period beginning with Wellhausen,¹ and by C. Westermann for 1958 on.² Two pericopes are usually distinguished in the chapter: vss. 1-6 and 7-21. These have been variously attributed to diverse sources (including J, E, and D),³ and the precedence of each defended in turn. The present trend is towards declaring both late in origin.⁴ However, the

¹"Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung von Gen 15," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 70 (1958): 107-126. In capsule form, he traces the development of critical exegesis in a 400-odd-words-long footnote (p. 108, n. 4) from Wellhausen through Gunkel, Smend, Eichrodt, Eissfeldt, König, Procksch, till Skinner, Noth, and von Rad (and Staerk, Volz, Eerdmans, Simpson, G. Hölscher and Jepsen for differing opinions about the distribution of the chapter between sources). See also H. Cazelles, "Connexions et Structure de Gen. XV," Revue Biblique 69 (1962): 321-325; A. Caquot, "L'Alliance avec Abram," Semitica 12 (1962): 51-55; J. van Seters, Abraham in History and Tradition (New Haven/London: Yale, 1975), pp. 249-253 and R. E. Clements, Abraham and David: Genesis 15 and its Meaning for Israelite Tradition (London: SCM, 1967), pp. 16, 17 n. 7.

²"Genesis," in S. Herrmann and H. W. Wolff, eds., Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), section I, 2:253-255.

³"There is great diversity of opinion about the unity or disunity of Gen 15 and about the antiquity of the traditions contained in the chapter," according to van Seters, Abr. in Hist., p. 249.

⁴M. Anbar, "Genesis 15: A Conflation of Two Deuteronomic Narratives," Journal of Biblical Literature 101 (1982): 39-55; L. Perlitt, Bundestheologie im Alten

ideas contained in this chapter should be understood

not by theories about their possible sources, but by recognizing the unique way in which Israel shaped them . . . the pre-Israelite tradition of a covenant with Abraham was of great consequence in helping to shape Israel's understanding of its relationship to God, and this covenant was eventually set in a position of great prominence.¹

It is possible to defend the early origin of the covenant notions reflected in this chapter.² In any case, the attribution of "lateness" and composite character to the passage hinges on the presence of alleged "discrepancies,"³ which may be questioned. Modern authors have been known to reject the multiple source attribution for this chapter. One could cite B. D. Eerdmans,⁴ P. Volz and W. Rudolph,⁵ as well as more conservative authors such as B. Jacob.⁶ More recently, J. Hoftijzer has also argued for

Testament (Neukirch: Neuk. Verlag, 1969); and their references to other literature.

¹Clements, p. 87.

²See C. L. Rogers, "The Covenant with Abraham and Its Historical Setting," Bibliotheca Sacra 127 (1970): 241-56.

³See J. Wellhausen, Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments, 3d ed. (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1899), p. 21; Anbar, JBL 101: 40; and also van Seters, Abr. in Hist., p. 249.

⁴Alttestamentliche Studien, 1: Die Komposition der Genesis (Giessen, Töpelmann, 1908), especially p. 33.

⁵Der Elohist als Erzähler: ein Irrweg der Pentateuch Kritik? (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1933), p. 27.

⁶Das erste Buch des Torah, Genesis (Berlin, 1934) translated as The First Book of the Bible, Genesis (New York: Ktav, 1974).

the unity of the chapter.¹ The plausibility of such a unitary conception of the passage opens the way for a renewed attention to the traditional exegesis of the passage.

The same result is attained after considering the exegetical difficulties inherent in the passage and the solution offered by classical literary analysis. There is a trend in critical scholarship to treat this passage as a stylized oracular formula without concrete referents in Abraham's life.² This would do away with the need to account for the "fear" from which Abraham is enjoined to refrain in 15:1. Such explanation, however, has been decried also from a critical perspective.³ One should, therefore, exercise caution, restudy the rationale for the form-critical attempt to explain away the difficulties, and give renewed attention to the precise content of the formula.

Such attention to content may be found in other types of interpretation, including the traditional. These

¹J. Hoftijzer, Die Verheissungen an die Drei Erzväter (Leiden: Brill, 1956), pp. 17-20.

²"Ein stilisiertes Heilsorakel" that "will nur ganz allgemein sagen, dass Abraham ein Heilswort von Jahwe empfängt," as C. Westermann expressed it. After quoting some Near Eastern and Amerindian ancient oracles, he concludes: "Man kann dann nicht fragen, worin denn der 'Lohn' für Abraham bestehen soll, und ob bei dem Schutz an bestimmte Bedrohungen Abrahams gedacht sei." Altes Testament, 2: 258-9.

³See van Seters, Abr. in Hist., p. 255.

types of interpretation, though diverse, do attribute a particular meaning to each of the parts of the divine message.

Ancient exegetes were reluctant to emend the text and certainly could not dilute its meaning on account of source-critical or form-critical considerations (as above). Therefore, they applied their ingenuity to solve exegetical problems within the data afforded by the canonical literature, and their insights are thus often better controlled than many of the critical suggestions.

This is not to deny all value to modern critical investigation or to suggest a return to a pre-critical methodology. But we should give due regard to their respect for the received text, revalue the synchronic semantics and canonic contextualization they utilized, and recognize their relevance from a scientific viewpoint.

In this dissertation, therefore, the ancient midrashic expositions of this passage are described and analyzed, and an attempt is made both to understand each on its own terms and to determine what are the potential contributions of those expositions for historical and exegetical studies.

Apart from the special relevance of ancient expositions, certain exegetical difficulties deserve a renewed study on their own. There is still a lack of agreement both among translators and exegetes on basic

features of the text. These include the import of "after these things," the pointing of *mgn*, the morphological and syntactical analysis,¹ certain lexical values,² and the correct text of the last clauses, to name only the more salient difficulties.³

Such exegetical options are in dynamic relationship to central issues: What dangers constitute the occasion for God's offer of protection? What is the "reward" envisioned by the text in this connection, and what does it compensate for? How should Abraham's faith be understood? What is the nature of the "righteousness" here alluded? Does the passage connect in some way the "believing" with the promised "reward"?⁴ If so, does the text present this faith as centered on the hope of a compensation for Abraham's obedience? Recent commentators have so thought.⁵

¹As. e.g., whether *māgēn* and *šākār* are both predicates of the same subject, or the latter starts a new sentence.

²As, e.g., *mešeq* in 15:2.

³As, e.g., the reading of the Samaritan Pentateuch, 'arbeh instead of MT harbeh.

⁴The promises that prompted Abram's faith (vss. 4, 5) were pronounced at his request of clarification (vss. 2, 3) for the announcement that his reward (*šākār*) would be very great (vs. 1).

⁵The phrase *wayyahšebha lô š'dāqāh* has been sometimes understood as stating that Abraham considered the promises to be a fair deal and a just compensation for his toils: "Abram believed the LORD, and credited it to Him as righteousness." Cf. L. Gaston, "Abraham and the Righteousness of God" in *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 2 (1980): 41 and *passim*. See also M. Oeming, "Ist Genesis

One has suggested that

It is often said that Genesis 15 was attractive to Paul because it speaks of Abraham's faith and not his works, but that is not true. Gen 15:1 says his "reward" (*misthos*) will be great, and Targum Neofiti has a long discussion of Abraham's works which receive a reward and their relationship to the following unconditional promise.¹

The need is thus evident for further study on the relationship of this "reward" with the offer of protection and other promises, with Abraham's faith and with the accreditation of righteousness.

To our knowledge, these specific tasks have not been carried out before. Several Ph.D. dissertations² have analyzed the midrashic exegesis of Genesis 15 in some of the documents here studied, but they aimed mainly to reveal the enclosed picture of Abraham and the way in which Gen 15:6 specifically was understood and utilized, as their particular concerns called for. In this work, instead, the focus is the whole unit (Gen 15:1-6), and detailed attention is given to the way in which each of its verses

15:6 ein Beleg für die Anrechnung des Glaubens zur Gerechtigkeit?" Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 95 (1983): 182-97.

¹L. Gaston, Paul and the Torah (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1987), p. 125.

²T. P. McGonigal, "'Abraham Believed God:' Genesis 15:6 and Its Use in the New Testament" (Fuller Theological Seminary, 1981); D. Sutherland, "Genesis 15:6: A Study in Ancient Jewish and Christian Interpretation" (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982); and, too late to be included in the present research, L. L. Bethune, "Abraham, Father of Faith: The Interpretation of Genesis 15:6 from Genesis to Paul" (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1987).

was exegeted, while an attempt is also made here to relate the findings to their conclusions.

Methodology and Definitions

The analytical description of ancient midrashic expositions deals with the precise forms in which the passage was understood and the ways by which the expositors arrived at such understanding.

Definitions

Passage demarcation

Since we are here dealing with exegetical texts, not with punctiliar allusions, the whole text unit (Gen 15:1-6) is employed. Only those midrashic expositions that dealt with this entire unit (by itself or as part of a larger one) are considered.

Exposition

"Exposition" refers here to statements with an exegetical intent, whether in a primarily exegetical work or not. Works that purport simply to convey the text (as, e.g., the LXX, Peshitta, and other ancient versions) though carrying an implicit exegesis that sometimes may be related to known Midrashim, are excluded from the list of documents to be studied, though they are kept as terms of comparison

for research into those documents.¹

Midrashic documents

The term "midrashic" is not here limited to the strict Rabbinic genre² and includes the re-use of Scriptural texts and their history with a religious reflection.³

Comprised documents

By "ancient midrashic expositions" it is meant documents originating after the close of the canon but containing a text⁴ that can reasonably be argued to have been established before the Middle Ages--i.e., by the end

¹The Targumim, although also conveying the complete text of the Pentateuch, contain lengthy insertions which obviously were never considered merely translational.

²As defined in the Encyclopaedia Judaica (New York: McMillan, 1974), s.v. "Midrash."

³As described in a "now virtually authoritative" way by Renee Bloch, "Midrash," Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplement, Fasc. 28 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1955) col. 1264ff. according to J. N. Lightstone, "Form as Meaning in Halakic Midrash," Semeia 27 (1983, 2): 25. This has been corrected and refined in A. Wright, "An Investigation of the Literary Form, Haggadic Midrash, in the Old Testament and Intertestamental Literature," Th.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1965. His refinements are here adopted unless otherwise indicated and explained. See also Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1962) 3: 376. For the various senses of the term, see the discussion by Wright starting in p. 5 and by J. Neusner, Comparative Midrash: The Plan and Program of Genesis and Leviticus Rabbah (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986) and Midrash in Context: Exegesis in Formative Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), introductions.

⁴The chronological limitation here mentioned does not apply to the manuscript copy itself.

of antiquity.¹ The reasons for selecting this early period have been discussed above. All relevant documents are covered.

Exegetical Procedures

To determine potential exegetical contributions of those documents, a clear awareness of exegetical alternatives in the passage is required. The attempt is made, therefore, to obtain this awareness by exegeting Gen 15:1-6 anew, in dialogue with recent expositors.² At the same time, a fresh effort is made to solve the difficulties offered by the passage.

In accordance with the recent trends already intimated,³ and the objectives fixed above, the text is studied in its present, received canonical form, regardless

¹The latest documents that must be studied here, the early or classical Rabbinic midrashim, can be dated only in this approximate fashion. For the scope of "early" or "classical Rabbinic," see J. Bowker, The Targums and Rabbinic Literature (London: Cambridge, 1969), pp. 69-92 and D. Patte, Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine (Missoula: Scholars, 1975), p. 1.

²Mostly from 1960 on.

³As, e.g., B. S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 151: "It is not intended as a deprecation of this critical research to suggest that the canonical significance of the promises to the patriarchs should not be lost in the search to unravel the complex problems in the literature's early development."

of its development according to literary criticism.¹ We give preferential attention to context and literary structure,² as well as to the semantic content of key terms in the passage, and its historical setting.

Results

The exegetical contributions from ancient midrashic expositions are evaluated in the light of the exegetical endeavor. The theological and exegetical significance of those expositions lie in the valuable insights for the understanding of Gen 15:1-6 for which the retrieval attempt is here made. Also indicated are some of the gains in the area of the history of religious ideas in Judaism and Christianity.

¹For additional justification of such a procedure, see McGonigal, p. 50, n. 5. The way in which the special interests of our research affect this decision is spelled out in the corresponding chapter below.

²As determined objectively by the observation of framing formulae and recurrent words and phrases of the text. See the contrast of this "traditional" method with new "structuralist" approaches in P. Ricoeur, "La quete du sens," in Exegese et Hermeneutique (Paris: du Seuil, 1971), p. 60, and the elucidation of important principles as exemplified in the work of P. Beauchamp, Creation et separation: Etude exegetique du chapitre premier de la Genese (Paris: Bibl. de Sc. Rel., 1969) in p. 74.

CHAPTER I
GEN 15:1-6 IN ANCIENT
MIDRASHIC EXPOSITIONS

The aim of this description is to provide a basis for a study of the exegetical interpretations and related theological ideas of the midrashic works comprised in the present investigation.

The description often takes minute details into consideration. This is to acquaint the reader with the whole from which conclusions are drawn, so as to be able to judge the validity of the conclusions with a right sense of proportions.

Analyses of this kind are not readily available. Scholarly works on those ancient exegeses are few and often have wider concerns that preclude their concentration on the exegetical issues posed by this unit.

The ancient interpretations concerned are conveyed in different ways, and the procedures to be followed vary accordingly. Some ancient works have an explicit exegetical intention (as Philo or the Midrashim); they are couched in language that makes clear immediately their character in this regard. They are works about the Bible, not retellings of the same.

The task in such a case is merely to inventory their conclusions, organize them, and describe their exegetical techniques.

Most of these compositions (Jubilees, 1QapGen, the Targums), however, convey their exegesis through a paraphrase. They do not take the Biblical text for granted, but see its repetition as necessary and relevant, though with modifications aimed at making it more understandable. Our task, then, is to compare such compositions with the Hebrew text of Genesis and analyze every deviation from the latter. Some differences could derive from a variant Vorlage or vocalization. From the remainder we can then determine which points were perceived as standing in need of clarification through a different choice of words. We also can infer some of their underlying exegetical conclusions and then proceed as in the former case.

The text of Genesis used for this comparison is the traditional one that would in time come to be known as the Massoretic text,¹ with the variants suggested in ancient versions (Septuagint, Samaritan, Peshitta, and Vulgate)² as

¹K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelges., 1983).

²For the Septuagint (henceforth LXX), J. W. Wevers, ed., Genesis, Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974). "Samaritan" (Sam), though here lumped together with "versions," for the sake of brevity, actually refers to the Samaritan Hebrew Pentateuch, as edited by A. F. von Gall, Der Hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1918). The

alternative possibilities for a Vorlage.¹ The distinction indicated above between expositional and paraphrastic exegeses is clear-cut in most cases, but there are, of course, problematic ones. Josephus, for instance, uses as his exegetical medium not a commentary nor a complete verse-by-verse paraphrase, but a paraphrastic summary of the Biblical narrative. Because of the heterogeneity and idiosyncrasies of the literature to be covered, a preliminary but important task to be accomplished is a study of the characteristics of the document or author involved.

One can now delineate the system of procedures for the rest of the chapter. I use the following sequence of steps: (1) scope of category; (2) determination of the nature of the document, including its midrashic character; (3) summary of the context for the relevant passage; (4) presentation and open-ended analysis of the passage as it deviates from, or goes beyond, the canonical text; and (5) an inventory of reflected interpretations and theological

Peshitta (Pesh) is from the Peshitta Institute, eds., The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version (Leiden: Brill, 1977). For the Vulgate (Vg), R. Weber, ed., Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatum Versionem (Stuttgart: Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1969).

¹All these forms of the Old Testament have been recommended for comparison with the Targums by A. Angerstorfer, "Ist 4QTgLev das Menetekel der neueren Targumforschung?," Biblische Notizen 15 (1981): 74. Similar statements appear in M. Aberbach and B. Grossfeld, Targum Onqelos on Gen 49 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), p. xiv.

ideas, with reference to the system of ideas in the author or the work as a whole. Deviations from this pattern are due to the nature of the material and explained on the spot.

Before the Middle Ages, midrashic productions fall within one of the following types: (1) Apocryphal or Pseudepigraphical works, (2) Qumran productions, (3) Hellenistic writers, and (4) Rabbinical literature.¹

Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical Literature:
The Book of Jubilees

Scope

"Apocryphal" and "pseudepigraphical" are here taken *sensu lato*, as in the collection of R. H. Charlesworth.² With few exceptions, it refers to Jewish or Christian works dating between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. They build upon Old Testament ideas and narratives and are attributed to Old Testament worthies or otherwise claim to contain God's message.

Therefore this research in Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha included fragmentary works of Judeo-Hellenistic

¹The types here listed, common in the scholarly literature and reference works, are of different kinds (geographical, linguistic, formal), and there is some overlapping (e.g., Qumran scrolls include some Pseudepigrapha), but no practical problem is thereby created for this research.

²See "Definition of Pseudepigrapha," in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983), 1:xxiv, xxv.

authors which formerly used to be classified under the more general heading of "Hellenistic literature."¹ All authors employed in Charlesworth's collection such as Philo the Epic Poet, Ezekiel the Tragedian, Pseudo-Eupolemus, Cleodemus Malchus, etc., were thus covered in the research reported here. However, most of them make no reference to the patriarch Abraham. Of those who do, as e.g., ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus),² 1 Maccabees,³ 4 Ezra,⁴ 2

¹According to M. S. Hurwitz, "Hellenistic Jewish Literature," in Encyclopaedia Judaica (New York: McMillan, 1971), 8:304, this comprises Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and "individual authors."

²Sirach 44:19-21 (200-175 B.C.) makes reference to parts of Gen 12, 17, 18, 22 and/or 15 in praise of Abraham (this and the following mentions of Apocrypha are based on R. H. Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English. Oxford: Clarendon, 1913, while those of Pseudepigrapha on Charlesworth, The OT Pseudepigrapha). There "the covenant" may allude to Gen 15 or (more likely, in view of the association with circumcision) to Gen 17; "the stars" may proceed from 15:5 or (more credibly, in view of the mention of an oath) from 22:17, and so on. There is no unambiguous reference to the oracle of 15:1-6.

³1 Maccabees 2:52 (100-70 B.C.) alludes to Gen 22 with the language of Gen 15:6: "Was not Abraham found faithful (**pistos**) in temptation, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness?" The second half of the verse is identical with LXX Gen 15:6b, so it does not throw light on the author's understanding of the Gen passage. He may have connected the reliability (***mūnāh** = **pistis**) of Abraham under trial with his trust (***mn** = **pisteuō**) at Gen 15:6, as James does in the NT (2:22, 23).

⁴4 Ezra 3:13,14 (100-120 A.D.) contains a reference to a revelation of "the end of the times" to Abram "secretly by night" which alludes, most likely, to Gen 15. As scholars recognize (Charles, Pseudepigrapha, ad 4 Ezra 3:15, n. 14), this idea arose by reading Gen 15:9-21 in the light of Dan 2 and 7. It can be found in the Palestinian Targum on Gen 15:11-12. But 4 Ezra gives no clue about the way he interpreted 15:1-6.

Baruch,¹ Testament of Abraham,² and the Hellenistic Synagogue Prayers,³ almost all contain only ambiguous allusions and lack an extended treatment of the whole unit (Gen 15:1-6). The Apocalypse of Abraham, though based to a large extent on the vision of Gen 15:7-21,⁴ does not elaborate on our unit except for part of Gen 15:1 and

¹In 2 Baruch 57:2 (100-120 A.D.), it is explained that Abraham is symbolized in a previous vision by a fount of bright waters, because in his time, "belief in the coming judgment was then generated, and hope of the world that was to be renewed was then built up, and the promise of the life that should come hereafter was implanted." Probably the same understanding of Gen 15 as in 4 Ezra is here at work.

²T Ab (75-125 A.D.), in spite of its concentration on the patriarch, contains few allusions to the promises made to Abraham in Gen. These few refer to Gen 22 rather than Gen 15 (Recension A, 1:5, 4:11, 8:5-7).

³They are embedded in Apostolic Constitutions 7.33.2-7, and give preference to Gen 17 and 22 when alluding to the promises made to Abraham. However, we read in vss. 14-15 that "[F]rom the beginning of our forefather Abraham's laying claim to the way of truth, you led (him) by a vision, having taught (him) what at any time this world is. And his faith traveled ahead of his knowledge, but the covenant was the follower of his faith." In view of the interpretations of Gen found in 4 Ezra and 2 Bar, the vision about "what at any time this world is" seems to refer to the apocalyptic revelations that covered the future history of the world retrojected from Dan 2, 7 into Gen 15. Hence we should probably identify the faith that "traveled ahead of his knowledge" (Gen 12:1, cf. Heb 11:8) and preceded "the covenant" with the attitude of Abraham recorded in Gen 15:6. Apos Con 8.12.23, usually interpreted as a Christian interpolation in the document (ibid.), may well, from this perspective, be pre-Christian. However, the "covenant" alluded to in these fragments is described with the language of Gen 22:17 and 17:7, not that of Gen 15.

⁴Ap Ab 9ff.

15:5.¹ Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, which parallels extensive portions of Genesis, nevertheless skips Gen 14-15.² The same is true for Pseudo-Eupolemus in the extant abstract,³ though he may have fully dealt with Gen 15:1-6 in his original work. All these works, therefore, are bypassed in the rest of the chapter. This textual unit, however, is clearly discernable in the targum-like

¹Ap Ab 9:4: "I am the protector of you and I am your helper." This, according to the translator and annotator Rubinkiewicz, presupposes the reading of mgn as mêgên (Charlesworth, Pseudepigrapha, 1:693 note b.). This is, as a matter of fact, the reading in all ancient sources except the MT. Cf. the observations to the text of Jub and 1QapGen below. For parallels to Gen 15:5, see ApAb 20:3-5, 21:1ff. The tradition of looking at the stars from on high is discussed below in connection with Philo.

²This refers to the main narrative sequence. In chap. 23:5-7, Joshua makes in his covenant renewal address a prophetic racconto of Abraham's Gen 15 vision (cf Josh 24:2-4), but again, Gen 15:1-6 is virtually skipped. The only points of contact are the mention of an oracle through a vision (dixi ei in visu) and Abraham's complaint of childlessness, which in Pseudo-Philo takes the form of a question about Sarai's sterility (Ecce nunc dedisti mihi mulierem, et haec sterilis est. Et quomodo habebō semen de mea petra conclusa?). The rest concentrates on the vision of Gen 15:7ff. This is also alluded to by Amram in 9:3. A midrashic exegesis of Gen 15:5, according to which Abraham was physically lifted above the firmament (cf. below on Philo) is passingly mentioned in 18:5.

³An Hellenistic author, usually considered to be a Samaritan writer (see M. Hengel, Judentum und Hellenismus [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1969] pp. 162-169; Ben Zion Wacholder, "Pseudo-Eupolemus' Two Greek Fragments on Abraham," Hebrew Union College Annual 34 [1963]: 83-113, esp. 84, n. 11, and the bibliography therein cited), wrongly identified as Eupolemus (an idea disputed by R. Doran in the introduction to his translation of the text in Charlesworth, The OT Pseudepigrapha, 2:873-79), summarily quoted by Alexander Polyhistor in a section preserved by Eusebius Praepar. Evang. 9:17, and coming close to the passage without actually touching it.

passage of Jubilees 14:1-6. This passage requires a more detailed examination.

Jubilees

The document as a whole

This document,¹ composed in Hebrew in the second century B.C., has been preserved for this passage only in Ethiopic.² The translation, however, is reliable.³

The book reads like an extended chronicle of the

¹This information, except as otherwise accredited, is based on O. S. Wintermute, "Introduction," in Charlesworth, Pseudepigrapha, 2:35-50.

²It was translated into Greek and Syriac, but the relevant passage is not extant in any of the three languages. This is unfortunate, because the task of analyzing small details that deviate from the Bible necessitates an accurate text. In this case, the "original" is a secondary translation of the Greek into Ethiopic.

³Studies on the Ethiopic text of Jubilees in the light of the published Qumran fragments show that it "is very accurate and reliable. It reproduces the Hebrew text (via a Greek intermediate stage) literally and precisely in nearly all cases," according to J. C. VanderKam, Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees (Missoula: Scholars, 1977), p. 94. See also R. Pummer, "The Book of Jubilees and the Samaritans," Eglise et Théologie 10 (1979): 162. There is another secondary translation from the Greek, the Latin one. But this passage is also lacking in the latter, and thus no comparison is possible. Due to a lack of formal training in Ethiopic, the present study is based on the English version. A few (assisted) references to the Ethiopic text appear in footnotes. The English is from Charlesworth, Pseudepigrapha, 2:52 ff. and the Ethiopic from R. H. Charles, ed., The Ethiopic Version of the Hebrew Book of Jubilees (Oxford: Clarendon, 1895).

world,¹ emphasizing Biblical details of the past and future history of Israel related to its own life situation in Hellenistic times.

Theologically it stands in a line ancestral to the sectarian works of Qumran² and seems to understand itself as part of a second Torah.³

The midrashic character of the book of Jubilees has been established by detailed studies since the past century, and thus no further survey of this aspect of the work is necessary.⁴

The book purports to be the report of revelations

¹It does not show evidence, however, of any source independent from the Bible (Wintermute, "Introduction," p. 45). It emphasizes those details of Biblical history that could be related to its own life situation in Hellenistic times.

²Apparently, it provided Qumran with a solar calendar and contributed to its highly developed angelology. Such is the "virtually unanimous" consensus of scholarship; Pummer, "Jub. and the Sam." p. 150. See also M. Testuz, "Le Livre des Jubilés et la Litterature Essénienne," in Les Idées Religieuses du Livre des Jubilés (Paris: Droz and Minard, 1960), pp. 179-95, esp. concluding paragraph. Others have not followed Testuz, however, in his conviction that the book was Essenian. On this, see John C. Endres, "Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees" (Ph.D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1982), pp. 12-14.

³See 6:22, 30:12,21, 50:6. See also S. Zeitlin, "The Book of Jubilees: Its Character and its Significance," Jewish Quarterly Review 30 (1939): 21, 30.

⁴A. Dillmann, "Das Buch der Jubiläen und sein Verhältnis zu den Midraschim," in Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 11 (1857): 161-3; for modern studies, see the bibliography in Testuz, Jubilés, pp. 203-4, plus the discussion in Wintermute, "Introduction," pp. 39-41.

of God to Moses on Mount Sinai. After the framing report of historic and predictive revelations in chap. 1, chaps. 2-4 concern the stories of Creation, Adam, and his descendants (paralleling Gen 1-4 though inserting laws taken from Exodus and Deuteronomy). Chaps. 5-10 deal with the Noah stories (paralleling the same chapters in Genesis, inserting laws on feasts, instructions about the calendar, and abundant demonological haggadot). Chapters 11-23 contain the Abraham stories. Their first part includes legendary material on the youth of the patriarch. Ultimately, this material goes back to midrashic reflection.¹

Later in life, Abraham devotes his time to astrology, until he realizes that God can overrule all signs of heaven (Jub 12:16-21). Then he directly seeks God Himself in prayer, and is instructed to "come forth from your land" (paralleling Gen 12:1-3). An angel then opens Abraham's

¹As, e.g., his shooing away the crows (retrojected from Gen 15:11) in ch. 11, or the burning down of the temple of idols, where Haran died trying to put out the fire (an idea derived from be'ur kasdim). According to R. H. Charles, though Jubilees does not use the legend of Abram in a fiery furnace (see Vermes, Scripture and Tradition in Judaism [Leiden. Brill, 1961], pp. 85-7), "Haran's fate in [Jub 12:]14 [cf. Gen 11:28] is a relic of this idea based on Gen 15:7, Exod 20:2, Isa 29:22." The same is valid for the idea of Abraham as an astrologer, derived from Gen 15:5 and 22:17. Thus the legendary material does not derive from independent accounts, but from creative reflection upon and imaginative amplification of the Biblical narratives. See above on the characteristics of the document (Wintermute, "Introduction," pp. 45-46).

mouth and ears so that he can speak Hebrew, the necessary medium of revelation. During the next winter he copies the books of Terah (written in Hebrew) and as the rainy season ends he starts out for Canaan with the blessing of Terah (Jub 12:25-31).

The next chapter (Jub 13) summarizes Gen 12-14 with little interference from legendary material. According to his custom, the author retrojects the law of tithe to the incident of Gen 14:20 (the passage in Jubilees has arrived mutilated: Jub 13:25b-27).

Relevant passage

Jub 14:1-6 (= Gen 15:1-6) keeps very close to the Genesis text.¹ The few deviations (here underlined) may be dealt with after quotation:

14: (1) And after these things, in the fourth year of this week, on the first of the third month, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a dream, saying, "Don't fear, Abram. I am your defender and your reward (will be) very great." (2) And he said, "O Lord, O Lord, what will you give me? I am going on without children. And the son of Maseq, the son of my handmaid, is Eliezer of Damascus. He will be my heir, but you have not given seed to me." (3) And he said to him, "This

¹VanderKam, Textual and Historical Studies, p. 136, concludes that "E[thiopic] J[ubilees] bore no or very few discernible traces of textual alteration due to the influence of the LXX and/or E[thiopic version of the Bible]." This closeness of Jub to Gen, then, cannot be explained merely as a result of harmonizing tendencies in transmission. On the other hand, such respectful treatment of the unit is not characteristic of Jubilees. See F. Martin, "Le livre des Jubilés. But et procédés de l'auteur. Ses doctrines," Revue Biblique 20 (1911): 327. We deal with this fact after the analysis.

one will not be your heir, but one who will come from your loins will be your heir." (4) And he took him outside and he said to him, "Look into heaven and count the stars if you are able to count them." (5) And he looked at the heaven and he saw the stars. And he said to him, "Thus shall your seed be." (6) And he believed the Lord and it was counted for him as righteousness.¹

In the fourth year of this week: i.e., of the first heptad of the 41st Jubilee from Creation (Jub 13:16ff). The peculiar chronological annotation of Biblical events has given the book its present name.²

On the first of the third month: i.e., in relation to Shebuot (Pentecost).³ On the same month God had made the covenant with Noah (Jub 6:1-10).⁴ He foreordained the same date for the Sinai covenant (6:11)⁵ and provided for sundry

¹Charlesworth, Pseudepigrapha, 2: 84.

²It was known formerly as "little Genesis" (Lep-togenesis), the book of division of times, etc. (see introductory works above under the heading "Document"). For the implied year in the life of Abram, see below on Qumran material (1QapGen agrees closely). For the Jubilees annotation, see Testuz, Jubilés, pp. 138-9.

³For the profuse bibliography on the calendar of Jubilees, see J. A. Fitzmyer, The Dead Sea Scrolls: Major Publications and Tools for Study, Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 131 ff. The transliteration Shebuot, employed by several Jubilees specialists, reflects the equation of the feast with covenant oaths. On this see note below on the importance Jubilees bestows on "the covenant between the pieces."

⁴Apparently based on Gen 8:14, which dates the drying-up of the earth after the Flood on the 27th of the second month, i.e., three or four days before.

⁵According to Exod 19:1, Israel arrived at Sinai on the third new moon of the year.

other key events in patriarchal times. It was, therefore, "Covenant day," so to speak. The author fused the covenantal core clause ("so that I might be God for you and for your seed after you") with Gen 15:7 (=Jub 14:7) taking it from Gen 17:7.¹ This underlines the covenantal conception of this passage in the document.

In a dream. The Danielic category "night visions" (Dan 7:7,13), in conjunction with the time of the day implied in Gen 15:5, may have determined this interpretation of mah^a zeh.²

I am your defender: The "shield" of Gen 15:1 in our versions has been replaced by a "defender" in Jubilees.³

¹The covenant of circumcision also appears in Jubilees, however, in connection with the feast of the first-fruits (Jub 15:1-15). S. Zeitlin, "The Book of Jubilees: Its Character and Its Significance," Jewish Quarterly Review 30 (1939): 6 and M. Testuz, Les Idées Religieuses du Livre des Jubilees (Geneva: Droz, and Paris: Minard, 1960), pp. 146-9, have argued that the community using Jub interpreted Shebuot not as "weeks," but as "oaths" (i.e., the promises of God) and celebrated it on the 15th of the third month, together with the feast of first fruits.

²As suggested by the actual occurrence of the phrase (en horamati tês nyktos) in many LXX manuscripts at the equivalent point in Gen 15:1.

³The involved Ethiopic term is stated to be akin to Hebrew qwm, and to mean as the latter to stand, arise, etc. but also to assist or accompany somebody protecting or defending him: "Assistere, adesse alicui protegendo vel defendendo," in A. Dillmann, Lexicon Linguae Aethiopicae (New York: Ungar, 1955), columns 451-3. No mention of "shield," in contrast, occurs there, but only under other Ethiopic words (col. 333, 675, 883). One of those other terms is a verb translated "to protect with a shield." Its non-occurrence here is relevant to VanderKam's previously quoted conclusion that Ethiopic Jubilees shows little or no

One could imagine this to be a targum-like replacement of a metaphor by its referent, because of either reverential (avoidance of calling God by the name of an object) or explanatory considerations.¹

However, no reasonably literal ancient version of the OT has "shield" at this point.² All those forms of the Genesis text are similar to Jubilees.³ True, a shield is akin to the idea of a defender or protector and, taken individually, any of these forms could be explained in terms of translational freedom. But it is highly unlikely that fairly literal versions would all turn independently creative at the same point, as if acting on cue, and resume their literalness afterwards.

Besides, if it were a targum-like paraphrase, we would expect the paraphrastic Palestinian Targum,⁴ which

influence of the LXX, since the term at LXX Gen 15:1, hyperaspizô, means literally "to cover with a shield (aspis)." See our first note under "Relevant Passage," above.

¹This has been suggested for the similar reading in Targum Onkelos: M. Aberbach and B. Grossfeld, Targum Onkelos to Genesis (New York: Ktav, 1982), p. 92, n. 2.

²This is, excluding the paraphrastic targums (see below). For the ancient versions consulted, see introductory remarks to this chapter. This is a fact that the apparati in the Biblia Hebraica (both Kittel's and the Stuttgartensia) fail to note.

³"I will protect you" (Pesh); "I protect you" (LXX); "I am your protector" (Vg).

⁴We deal with Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan fully later in this chapter.

specializes in reverential periphrasis and explanatory amplification, to keep the same substitution. As a matter of fact, however, it gives the name of the material object.

Thus, a better explanation would be to assume a different vocalization of **mgn** as the Vorlage (or reading thereof) in those ancient works. This would be **mêgên** (Hi. Ptcp. of **gnn**) instead of **mâgên** (a noun built also on **gnn**).¹ The literal targums (Samaritan, Onqelos) here read **tqwp**, "protection,"² thus reinforcing this conclusion.³ Rather than a deviation from the MT, then, we probably have here a variant vocalization of the consonantal text.

Both readings attest to a traditional understanding of **mgn** as a form of **gnn**, not of the verb **mgn**. This is relevant for the evaluation of modern proposals to read

¹So D. N. Freedman and P. O'Connor, "**mâgên**," in G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren and H.-J. Fabry, eds., Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament vol. 4 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984); R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer and B. K. Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (Chicago: Moody, 1980), s.v. "**gnn**," J. A. Strong, A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible; with Their Renderings in the Authorized English Version (Madison, N.J.: Abingdon, 1890), s.v. "**mâgên**," etc. The participle would satisfactorily explain, because of its multiple functions, the varying renditions as a present tense (LXX), a Semitic imperfect (Pesh) or an agent noun (Vg) in the versions.

²See below in this chapter, under "The Literal Targums."

³According to VanderKam, Textual Studies, p. 136, it is a "mandatory conclusion" from evidence that Jubilees followed "a Palestinian biblical text as the basis for his composition." Such is also the case with these Targums (see below).

there mogên.¹

And your reward: The conjunction does not appear in MT or LXX; the Vg and the literal targums support it.² The Ethiopic lexicographer Dillmann implies that the term for "reward" here is the one expected in this context.³ Thus no particular emphasis on the subject is thereby shown.

O Lord, O Lord: This repetition of the same term⁴ represents despota kyrie, a rather mechanical translation of the Hebrew ·donây YHWH into Greek also found in some MSS of the LXX.⁵ The Qere Perpetuum skirts the problem with Adonai Elohim.

Maseq, the son of my handmaid: Again this represents an interpretation like the one found in the LXX huios Masek

¹See M. Kessler, "The "Shield" of Abraham?" Vetus Testamentum 14 (1964): 494-7.

²"et merces tua magna nimis." Both this reading of the Vg and the text in Jub or Tg are unreported in the apparatus of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. It may have some significance for the syntactical study of the Gen passage and the question whether šakar opens a new sentence. Cf. our remarks on 1QapGen below.

³Dillmann identifies it as the proper equivalent of the Greek misthos (which translates the Hebrew šakar at Gen 15:1 and most other occurrences) and Latin "merces." Three other terms, plus derivatives, are also translated "merces" in his Lexicon, but in a secondary sense only. The primary senses of these other terms are "res acquisita" (col. 305), "donum" (col. 882-3), and "actio" (col. 1163).

⁴Not only in English, but also in Ethiopic.

⁵Though Charles gives just "LXX" as a reference in the note to The Ethiopic Version, ad loc., more complete text-critical information is available today in J. Wevers, Genesis.

tês oikogenous nou = ben mešeq bēyti. The Hebrew has been understood as "the son of that woman (~~mešeq~~) of my house," and this in turn as if it suggested a slave.

He will be my heir: Jubilees shortens and rearranges Gen 15:3, which reads in its canonical form: "Then Abram said: Behold, you have given me no seed, and behold, one born in my house will be my heir." It also omits the introduction to the oracle in Gen 15:4: "And behold, the word of the Lord came to him." A short "And he said to him" is substituted, as in Pesh.

From your loins. Dillmann's equivalent for the Ethiopic term involved would make it even closer to the Hebrew text: "belly"¹ = Heb mē^ceh, "entrails, belly."

And he looked . . . saw the stars. This addition to the Genesis text may have originated as a touch of dramatic art. Though apparently innocuous in itself, it paved the way for extracting from the Genesis narrative additional senses.² It thus illustrates midrashic development.

And it was counted for him as righteousness: The

¹Dillmann, Lexicon, col. 385: "venter, koilia, gaster."

²In Genesis, the last words before "Thus shall your seed be" refer to counting stars. Therefore, "Thus" is almost automatically understood as "so numberless as the stars." Here, however, the last image we have before the "Thus" is a man engrossed in the contemplation of a starry sky. This paves the way for an equation of "Thus" with "so majestic, so brilliant," etc. We have examples of such an interpretation: see below Philo, ad loc.

passive form is here to be remarked.¹ The shift from the active to a passive form indicates, as elsewhere,² an ancient understanding of Abraham (subject of the previous verb) as the logical object of the "counting" action.

The exegesis of Gen 15:1-6 in Jubilees

In summary, Jubilees adds "information" about the date in which revelation took place, interprets the nocturnal vision as a dream, understands *mgn* as protection, takes *Maseq* as a proper name, reduces two parallel sentences (on Abraham's concern for his heir) to one, adds a little drama to the narrative ("and he saw the stars"), and substitutes a passive for the original active form of the verb expressing the accreditation of justice. Most of these traits can be explained in terms of its midrashic genre.³

¹The Ethiopic root is stated by Dillmann to be a cognate of the Hebrew *hlq* and to share with the latter the senses "divide, allot," etc. In Ethiopic it also means "to count" (as in Jub 14:4; "numerare, enumerare"), and, in the passive-reflexive here involved, "to be reckoned, considered as" (Lat. "aestimari, existimari," Dillmann's Lexicon column 576). A short synopsis of the passive-reflexive conjugation may be found in S. Mercer, Ethiopic Grammar (New York: Ungar, 1961), pp. 32-33.

²Also found in LXX, Pesh, Vg, and the PTg.

³It is characteristic of ancient midrashic material to supply details not found in the Biblical text: "on introduit des glosses qui donnent le chiffre exact, la date précise." This is exemplified in the chronological note that introduces this passage in Jubilees. Other deviations can be subsumed under the category of simplification of the narrative aimed at an immediate understanding on the part of the unlearned. We meet again this popularizing style in

Theological ideas

Compared to the treatment of other Genesis passages in Jubilees, the interpretive traits studied above are scarce. This has been found, on the strength of a study of all similarly treated passages in the book, to be related to divine promises therein contained:

[Jub 14:1-15:4] c'est peut-être le morceau de quelque étendue où les Jubilés ont le plus respecté le texte biblique, parce que les promesses divines qui y sont reproduites sont la source de toute la grandeur d'Israël.¹

The interest of Jubilees in God's promises is confirmed in the study of this passage. Such interest is reflected, however, not merely in the scarcity of deviations, but also in their relative importance. In a part of the book where deviations are few, those which are boldest and longest stand out more prominently.

Indeed, not all interpretive traits receive here the same amount of space or creativity. Fourteen words, all foreign to the Genesis text, constitute the first trait. The second longest, the "dramatic" insertion, is made up of eleven, and it merely repeats in narrative form words already standing in Genesis as God's injunction.

the Targums. See A. Diez-Macho on midrashic techniques, "Le Targum Palestinien" in J.-E. Menard, ed., Exégèse Biblique et Judaïsme (Strasbourg: Faculté de Theologie Catholique, 1973), pp. 19-21; Wright, "Haggadic Midrash," pp. 111-4.

¹F. Martin, Revue Biblique 20: 327. See also p. 328.

Judging by these factors, the exposition of Gen 15:1-6 was of special interest for this author from the perspective of the date in which the oracle took place.

This, in turn, must be explained in terms of the covenantal theology of the document. Jubilees conceives four covenants of God with mankind (i.e., with the patriarchs Noah, Abraham, and Jacob; and with Israel at Sinai).¹ Three of them fell on the same day of the year (see comments above on the chronological insertion) and, because of the peculiar calendar of the book, also on the same day of the week.²

Now, for this author, dates are not mere labels for time-keeping; each day has its own intrinsic value, whether "holy," "pure," "impure," or even "abominable," according to its position in the immutably fixed revealed calendar (Jub 6:37).³ Thus the reiteration of divine promises and commandments (covenantal grants and stipulations) on certain dates is no coincidence; it is of the essence of

¹See Testuz, Jubilés, pp. 62-74.

²This was apparently a Sunday: many scholars, following A. Jaubert and D. Barthélemy, think that the year of Jubilees, as at Qumran, began on Wednesday. See E. Hilgert, "Jubilees and the Origin of Sunday," Andrews University Seminary Studies 1 (1963): 44-51; for a cautionary consideration, see Testuz, Jubilés, pp. 159-64.

³Testuz, Jubilés, p. 125.

time itself.¹ Those promises, therefore, stand out prominently in Jubilees and particularly in this passage.

Cette notion d'alliance en effet domine tout le Livre des Jubilés; c'est autour d'elle que s'ordonnent tous les développements des relations entre Dieu et Israël, et elle constitue un des dogmes fondamentaux de la foi de notre auteur.²

Students of the book have also concluded that the author emphasizes Abraham's previous prosperity, the victory over the four kings included (Jub 13, Gen 14), in order to associate them with the blessings of the covenant.³

The concern with the covenant as the main theological idea for this passage can also be ascertained from the fusion of passages in Jub 14:7. Not only did Abraham receive the Gen 15:1-6 oracle on "Covenant day," but also the covenantal core clause of Gen 17:7 was then

¹According to Endres, "The significance of this theologoumenon is critical for the book of Jubilees: even the people of Noah's generation were fully observant Mosaists, since they shared in the fullness of the covenantal relationship between God and Israel. There never was a time, therefore, when Israel's ancestors did not observe the customs and laws revealed at Sinai. This author rejected all developmental notions concerning Israel's religion" ("Interpretation in Jubilees," p. 277).

²Testuz, Jubilés, p. 70. He explains that this covenant was conceived as established in Creation and merely confirmed to the successive patriarchs and Israel. On the centrality of the covenant in Jubilees, see also A. Jaubert, La notion d'Alliance dans le judaïsme aux abords de l'ère Chrétienne, Patristica Sorboniensia 6 (Paris: Seuil, 1963), pp. 89-115; and Endres, "Interpretation in Jubilees," p. 278, who also refers to other authors on the same point.

³Testuz, Jubilés, p. 72.

pronounced (Jub 14:7).¹

This creativity when speaking of the covenant contrasts with the restraint shown about other relevant theological points.

Thus, for instance, in spite of its emphasis on revelations, the book shows considerable restraint when dealing with the vision of Abraham. Jubilees has many points of contact with apocalypticism,² and a well-developed eschatology.³ Nevertheless, it does not follow the route of other Apocrypha in making Gen 15 into an apocalyptic vision;⁴ it keeps the report in Jub 14:1-20 close to Gen 15:1-21.

Similarly, though Jubilees knows a doctrine of rewards and punishments (5:13-17; 9:15; 23:22, 30-31) according to the way in which each man has walked,⁵ and though it takes advantage of each opportunity to relate the injunctions of the Torah to primordial and patriarchal times,⁶ it lets slip this first mention of rewards in the

¹As Jub 22 shows, Abraham received even the full set of Deuteronomic blessings and curses! See Endres, "Interpretation in Jubilees," p. 277-8.

²Wintermute, "Introduction," p. 37.

³Testuz, Jubilés, pp. 165-77; G. L. Davenport, The Eschatology of the Book of Jubilees (Leiden: Brill, 1971).

⁴See above, under "Scope," notes on 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and the Hellenistic Synagogue Prayers.

⁵Testuz, Jubilés, pp. 93-99.

⁶See above, "The Document as a Whole."

Pentateuch without elaborating on it.

Neither does it elaborate on the patriarch's faith, though it is well aware that this believing attitude meant for Abraham to be accepted by God as a righteous person.¹ It is concerned with the imitation of the behavior of the patriarchs by their descendants (20:2-3), but not particularly with this manifestation of Abraham's faith or its effects.

Such restraint not only contrasts with other passages in Jubilees but also with profuse elaborations found in later documents on the passage here examined. More importantly, it enhances by comparison the importance of the more elaborately treated covenant promises in this passage.

Summary

Essentially, then, Jub 14:1-6 shows a covenantal understanding of Gen 15:1-6 with much restraint on other theological points. We will later remind ourselves of this starting point in a line of exegetical development to determine whether identical heightening of the covenant and reserve about other theological points also obtains in the following documents of the series.

¹See above the grammatical analysis of the expression.

Qumran Literature:
The Genesis Apocryphon

Of all Genesis materials found in Qumran,¹ the passage here concerned happens to be preserved only in a midrashic paraphrase, in 1Q Genesis Apocryphon.

The Document as a Whole

One of the major scrolls found in the first Qumran cave, albeit a poorly preserved one, the so-called "Genesis Apocryphon" (1QapGen) has defied several attempts at classification. Even so, the midrashic genre is above dispute.²

¹Twenty-three Genesis chapters are represented, entirely or in part (mostly in short fragments), in fourteen different manuscripts from Qumran caves (with very little overlapping). This includes both canonical forms of the text and paraphrases. See the "Index of Biblical Passages" in J. A. Fitzmyer, The Dead Sea Scrolls: Major Publications and Tools for Study, Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study 8 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 152-3.

²It has been called an "apocryphal version of stories from Genesis" by the first publisher, N. Avigad and Yigael Yadin, A Genesis Apocryphon: A Scroll from the Wilderness of Judea (Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1956), p. 38, but a "targum" by M. Black, The Scrolls and Christian Origins: Studies in the Jewish Background of the New Testament (New York: Scribner's, 1961), p. 193, and a "midrash" by other authors. The latter is an inclusive category. See J. A. Fitzmyer, The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary (Rome, Pontifical Bible Institute, 1966), pp. 5-12. It has been also called "the most ancient midrash of all. . . the lost link between the Biblical and the Rabbinical midrash" and "one of the jewels of midrashic exegesis," Vermes, Scripture, pp. 124, 126.

The provenance is unclear,¹ so we are reduced to classify it as Palestinian Jewish. The date of the copy can be established both from the general archaeological context and from the Herodian script as being near the turn of the era. The date for the original composition is less sure, but on philological and literary grounds it has been proposed for fifty to one hundred years before the copy.² Two columns have been well preserved: the last and therefore the innermost when the scroll was rolled up for the last time before discovery.³

The relevant passage is included in the best preserved columns within a narrative paralleling that of Gen 13:3-15:4. Almost every verse is represented in Aramaic rendering, at least partially.⁴

¹There are no specifically Essene ideas; some anti-Samaritan expressions have been detected. See the introduction in Fitzmyer, Genesis Apocryphon, pp. 10 ff.

²Ibid. pp. 13-25.

³They were not the last when the manuscript was made, however; not only does the text break off in midsentence at the end of the column 22, but stitching holes are visible in the border by which it was once sewn to the next leaf.

⁴The translation is almost literal, except for the following verses: 14:4-6 (paraphrase), 9 (abridgment), 10 ("correction" of Gen to avoid a difficulty in the narrative), 13-17 (expansions based on former or subsequent narrative, identification of places added), 20 (a specification to avoid misunderstandings), 15:1-3 (interpretive addition and paraphrase). Fitzmyer, Genesis Apocryphon, pp. 28-32.

Relevant Passage

My interest lies in this last paraphrase and interpretive additions to Genesis. The respective texts are given here in parallel columns according to the renderings of RSV and Fitzmyer:

Gen 15:1-4

[1] After these things,
the word of the Lord came to
Abram in a vision:

Fear not, Abram,
I am

your shield

your reward
will be very great

[2] But Abram said:
"O Lord GOD,

what wilt thou give me, for
I continue [KJV: "go hence"]
childless, and

the heir of my house is
Eliezer of Damascus?"
[4] And behold, the word of

1QapGen 22.27-34

[27] After these things
God appeared to
Abram in a vision
and said to him: "Look, ten
years [28] have elapsed
since the time you departed
from Haran; you passed two
years here, seven in Egypt,
and one [29] since you
returned from Egypt. Now
examine and count all that
you have; see how they have
doubled and multiplied [30]
beyond all that went forth
with you on the day when
you set out from Haran. Now
do not fear;

I am
with you, and I shall be to
you [31] both support and
strength. I shall be
a shield over you,
and shall repulse from you
him who is stronger than
you.

Your wealth and your flocks
[32] will increase very
much.

And Abram said:
"My Lord God,
my wealth and my flocks are
vast indeed, but why do I
have all these things,
seeing that I shall
die and depart barren and
without sons? Even one of
my household servants is to
inherit me, [34] Eliezer
the son of {...}

the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir."

But he said to him: This one shall not inherit you, but the one who shall go forth . . .

Since this is not a document explicitly about Genesis, we retain the procedure of a point-by-point comparison with the Biblical text as a means to discover exegetical intentions.

God appeared to Abram. Instead of "the word of the Lord came to Abram," the Apocryphon has this phrase, 'thzyw 'lh' l'brm. Since it is common in patriarchal narratives,¹ it may be the result of unconscious harmonization. Later expounders, however, move away from any suggestion of a visual apparition to Abram.²

Ten years. . . since. . . you set out from Haran. As Jubilees, 1QapGen prefaces the passage with a chronological note. Several authors have proved the multiple relationships between 1QapGen and Jubilees, and these chronological specifications figure prominently among them.³

The "ten years," however, are probably taken from

¹Gen 12:7 (twice), 17:1; 18:1; 26:2,24; 35:1,7,9; 48:3.

²See below on Targum Onqelos ad loc.

³Avigad and Yadin, A Genesis Apocryphon, pp. 37, 23-25, *passim* within the chapter "Contents of the Scroll," pp. 16-37; Fitzmyer, Genesis Apocryphon 14; P. Weimar, Literatur und Religion des Frühjudentums, pp. 144-55, as quoted in J. H. Charlesworth, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), p. 44.

Gen 16:3,¹ and their distribution within the decade among places of residence maximizes the stay in Egypt to obtain seven years there.² Abram had gone to Egypt fleeing a famine in Canaan (12:10), and seven-year cycles of abundance and scarcity were known for Egypt from later Gen narratives (41:25-57).³ Thus no sectarian ideological concerns need to be postulated for this chronological scheme.

The exegetical point here made and the relationship of this addition with Genesis are questions to be dealt with when the whole of the interpretation of the passage by 1QapGen has been analyzed.

I am with you . . . support and strength. Skipping

¹It could be objected that in 16:3 the close of this ten-year period of residence in Canaan refers to Abram's consorting with Hagar, not (as in 1QapGen 22.28) to the date of the oracle. However, other passages imply that those events were very close in time. Abraham was 75 when leaving Haran (Gen 12:4), and 86 when he became father for the first time (Gen 16:16).

²In line 28 "here" seems to refer comprehensively to the land of Canaan, not specifically to Hebron (cf. Gen 12:6-9, 13:18). Before going to Egypt, Abram resided first at Moreh (12:6,7), then near Bethel (12:8), and finally journeyed transhumantically to the Negeb (12:9). This latter seasonal displacement is also mentioned when recounting the events after the return from Egypt (13:3), only in reverse. Thus the first "two years" and the last "one year" are the very minimum to be conjectured for Canaan.

³This does not imply that this seven-year period in 1QapGen cannot be explained otherwise, but only that this is the most "economical" and neutral explanation. Given the prominence of the number seven in the OT, other hypotheses could certainly be entertained also.

merely redactional divergences from Genesis (as k^cn, "now"), we recognize this second interpretive addition starting at the end of line 30. It amplifies the promises of protection of the Genesis text on the basis of parallel passages in the Pentateuch.¹

Structurally, it is remarkable that the amplification precedes the literal rendering rather than follow it. Semantically, s^cd, "support," probably belongs to the area of "protection."² With tq^p, "strength," a term with connotations of overpowering, we arrive at a more active image of God's protection.³ Whatever the relevant nuances

¹"I am with you" appears verbatim as a promise to Jacob in Gen 28:15, and similar language appears in the stories of Ishmael (21:20), Isaac (26:3,24), and Joseph (39:2,21,23). 1QapGen inserts "I am with you" immediately after "Do not be afraid," thereby obtaining a text similar to Gen 26:24. The choice of this latter passage for the exposition of Gen 15:1 is understandable, given common points such as the reference to Abraham, the identical 'al tira' expression, and some of the promises of 15:1-6, which appear in 26:24 in summary fashion.

²It is associated in the OT with food (Gen 18:5, Judg 19:5,8, 1 Kgs 13:7, Ps 104:15); with physical supports or props (Prov 20:8; Isa 9:7[6]) and with God's protection, especially in the Psalms (18:35[36]; 20:2[3]; 41:3[4]; 94:18; 119:117). Given its association with tq^p here, the last nuance probably influenced the choice of the interpreter.

³It can hardly be doubted that it represents mgn, since this term is translated only tq^{wp}, ("strength" or "protection," Jastrow, M., A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature [New York: Pardes, 1950], s.v. "tq^{wp}") both in the Samaritan and the Onqelos targums (the most literal ones). The same dictionary abundantly illustrates connotations of overpowering.

in the mind of the author, these repetitive additions underline the importance that Yahweh's self-predication in Gen 15:1 had for him.

I shall be a mgn ... repulse ... stronger than you.

Only after these three interpretive additions (on God's presence, support, and strength) the author presents his literal rendering of the Genesis text: "I shall be a shield (or: protector) over you." But then the literalness is extreme: he gives the selfsame word for "shield" or "protector": *mgn*.¹

Having now temporarily left aside paraphrastic additions, the author may be giving his attempt at a literal rendering in the following words also. From this perspective, the following word (*w'sprk* in the transcription of Avigad and Yadin) may be important. As just given, it has proved unsatisfactory to students.² One can make a

¹The word may or may not appear in native Aramaic. The evidence of Jewish Aramaic cannot be contemplated in this case, since it is suspect of Hebraism. The term does not appear in the sense of "shield" in Stanley A. Cook, A Glossary of the Aramaic Inscriptions (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1974), but it may appear in Syriac, with the same vocalization as in Hebrew. See J. Payne Smith, A Compendious Syriac Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), s.v. "*mgn*"; though not in K. Brockelman, Lexicon Syriacum (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1966). In any case it was certainly known in Palestine. However, the point here is the extreme literalness of the translation at this point.

²The common Semitic root *spr* is well known, but its sense (mark, count, register, etc.) does not fit the context. See A. Dupont-Sommer, Les écrits esséniens découverts près de la Mer Morte (Bibliothèque historique, Paris: Payot, 1959), p. 306; W. W. Müller, "Die Bedeutung des Wortes '*sprk*' im Genesis-Apocryphon XXII, 31," Revue de

case, however, for reading it as w'skrn.¹

The letters 's, heading the problematic word, are clearly legible in the original manuscript. The aleph is the first person imperfect preformative of a verb (cf. the previous clause, starting with the pronoun 'nh, "I"). The context demands here the general meaning "repel an attack."² The root skr qualifies,³ and would, in context, yield the sense: "and I will stop for you the powerful outside of you."⁴ This would require to read the middle letter as kaph.

Indeed, in this document, kaph and pe are very similar, and the letter under discussion falls well within

Qumran 2 (1959-60): 445-7; Fitzmyer, Genesis Apocryphon, pp. 162-3.

¹First editions of a manuscript, even when carefully done as in this case, are rarely definitive in every detail. Even in our own passage, Fitzmyer has suggested better transcriptions, e.g., bhzw' instead of bhzy' in 22.27. He also prefers 'bdth instead of 'brth (though the latter had already been considered by the editors).

²See Fitzmyer's translation and his rationale: "Our own attempt to translate the phrase is a conjecture based on the context," Genesis Apocryphon, p. 162. See also the translation in K. Beyer, Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), p. 185.

³In Hebrew it is employed in Gen 8:2 for the stoppage of the fountains of the deep, and in Ps 63:12 in the sense of stopping the mouth of liars. As for Aramaic, Jastrow cites the senses "to bar, dam in; to stop, choke, [hinder, curb]." Bracketed senses derived from those attested in Ithp.

⁴I. e., "away from you," if taken in a strictly locative sense or if understood as in line 23, "besides you" = "other powerful."

the range of forms of both pe and kaph.¹ Thus, even if it were established that the scribe wrote pe and not kaph here, a scribal confusion would be likely and an emendation feasible.

As for the last letter, the only surviving part is a vertical stroke mostly below the line of writing and consistent not only with a final kaph but also with a final (energetic) nun.²

A reading w'skrn reminds one immediately of the Hebrew škrk that follows mgn in the consonantal text. In fact, the root skr can be also spelled škr.³ This suggests that lQapGen interpreted the Hebrew term through a homophone. God introduced himself to Abram as both his mgn and his skr. In an attempt to make its sense, "obstruction,"

¹The partial effacing of letters at this spot tends to approximate those forms even more. The transcription of Avigad and Yadin is technically correct, for in the standard Herodian script, medial pe is distinguished from medial kaph mainly by the angle between the upper horizontal stroke and the vertical one, which for pe is acute rather than straight. In kaph the upper and lower strokes are horizontal and parallel to each other. The letter here under discussion has a somewhat slanted upper stroke, but still parallel to the lower stroke. It could thus be considered as a pe with an unusual slanted foot, or a kaph with unusual angles between the vertical and horizontal components. The kaph is, from the viewpoint of context, preferable.

²Energetic nuns are well attested in this document. Cf. thwynny (2.5,6) and, close to the problematic word, yrtyny and yrtnk (22.33,34).

³For Hebrew, cf. Ezr 4:5, "hired," which is also the usual translation of škr. For Aramaic, see Jastrow, Dictionary, s.v. "škr."

fit this context of protective promises, the author transforms it into a reference to defensive obstructions that God would put in the way of the powerful that dared to attack Abram.

This understanding of the point in 1QapGen also explains satisfactorily the unusual idea of "stopping the powerful." As for "the powerful aside from you," the idea is not so strange once we realize that God reveals Himself to Abram here as his *tqp* = strength. God's strength curbs other kinds of forces, hostile ones.

Your wealth ... will increase very much. This clause reads at first as another paraphrase of the Hebrew *š'kārḱā*. If so, 1QapGen would conceive of "reward" in terms of material wealth.¹ But now, after the author has apparently given his "literal" rendering of *š'kārḱā*, we judge more likely that the clause actually represents the end of the verse, *harbēh š'od*. The words *yšgwn lhd'* ("will increase very much") correspond closely, since *šg'*, just like *rbh* Hiphil in Hebrew, may mean "grow, increase, become great," and *lhd'* is the equivalent of the Hebrew *š'od* "very much."²

The Hebrew form *harbēh* may be morphologically analyzed in different ways, including both infinitive

¹Such a conclusion is drawn, as a matter of fact, by Vermes, *Scripture*, p. 121.

²It is the equivalent selected in Onqelos *ad loc.* See also Jastrow, *Dictionary*, s.v. "hd".

absolute and second person masculine singular imperative of the Hiphil stem. The author seems to have understood the latter, and divided Gen 15:1 in a peculiar way: "Do not fear, Abram; I am your shield and your sākār. Increase greatly!"¹

The allusion to "flocks" may have been prompted by the employment of the same root rbh and imperative mood in the Genesis narratives (1:22; 8:17) for animal fecundity: Abraham is to "increase" or become great by means of an expansion of his cattle, which implies "wealth." The "increase" command, which the author thought he saw in Gen 15:1 as a blessing for Abram, is then transferred to the cattle, and since a second person singular verbal form is no longer possible, a third person plural imperfect is substituted instead.

If the transcription here suggested for 'skrn is rejected, then 'sprk must be understood as representing, not sākār, but mgn.² Thus, in any case, the notion of "reward," as opposed to a mere "increase," is absent from

¹The two traditional ways to divide the verse are:
I am your shield; your reward [shall be] very great
I am your shield, your reward, [which is] very great

The first is exemplified in the RSV, the second in the KJV.

²So Avigad and Yadin's "protect" (Gen. Apocr. ad loc.), Dupont-Sommer's "nimbus around" (Les écrits esséniens, p. 306), Müller's "great shield," in "Bedeutung des Wortes 'sprk," Revue de Qumran 2: 445, Fitzmyer "repulse" (Gen. Apocr. pp. 162-3); and our own alternative suggestion "corps of bodyguards."

lQapGen at Gen 15:1.

My wealth and my flocks are vast indeed. Here again the author has inserted his explanatory addition before the text he tries to explain. It expresses the author's conviction that Abram understood God's oracle as pointing to his past and present prosperity (as the opening interpretive addition wants) as well as to the future.

Why do I have all these things? These words show a fine appreciation of Hebrew (or Semitic) idiom. The Hebrew mah, literally "what?," also approximates in certain adverbial turns of the phrase "how" or "why."¹ Thus lQapGen interprets mah-titten li as "to what end (lm') will you give me?" or "what is the point of your giving me?" instead of literally "what will you give me?"

No verb, let alone a time reference, is present in his rendering (literally, "to what end all these to me?"), but Fitzmyer's translation, "why do I have all these things," captures the spirit well: the author considers past, present, and future blessings as a single continuum in need of clarification.

When I shall die ... naked ... without children.² The combination of these two facts is what made the

¹w. L. Holladay, A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), s.v. "mah," section (B).

²This is the translation that Fitzmyer gives as the "literal" one (p. 163). It should be preserved since it contributes to the understanding of the exegesis in lQapGen.

clarification indispensable. The term 'āriri is always employed in the sense of "childless" in the Hebrew Bible, though etymologically related to the idea of nakedness (roots 'rr, 'rh, 'wr).¹ The author of 1QapGen stresses its etymological sense according to his understanding of the passage, which would make it comparable to Job 1:21: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart."

In such a case, to what end are God's gifts, if Abraham cannot take them with him in departing this life and in addition he has no children?²

The words under consideration did not originate as an arbitrary addition to the text in Genesis but as a double rendering. The Hebrew 'āriri has been translated twice, once as "naked" and once as "without children," with a targum-like amplificatory technique.³ The Aramaic sentence could also be translated: "I, when I shall die naked, shall depart without children." Then we would have

¹Both Strong, Dictionary, and Harris-Archer-Waltke, Wordbook, derive it from 'rr. Another possibility is a Polel of 'wr I (notice the sense "put out--eyes" and the derived noun 'wr, "skin," suggesting an original sense "peeling," akin to 'rr "stripping"). The person "deprived," par excellence, is the one destitute of children.

²Fitzmyer, in his commentary on this passage of 1QapGen, argues for the validity of this understanding of 'ryry, since "the context seems to be martial" and Abram feels "stripped, dispoiled" (Genesis Apocryphon, p. 163).

³This technique appears already in the earliest known Targum, 4QTgLev. See Angerstorfer, "Ist 4QTgLev das Menetekel," Biblische Notizen 15: 71.

each word in the Genesis phrase *hólêk 'riri* translated twice in 1QapGen, as follows:

Genesis

1QapGen

hólêk I go

'mwt will die

'hk will depart

'riri stripped

'rtly naked

dl' bryn childless

One of my household servants ... the son of (...) It is not clear which of the two parts of this expression corresponds to uben mešeq bēyti hū' damešeq and which to ben bēyti in Genesis. The illegible word bracketed above makes conclusions even more difficult. That which is clear, however, is that the phrase combines elements of Gen 15:2c and 15:3. By means of such conflation, the author avoids dealing with the difficult text of 15:2.

But he said to him. This short introduction to 15:4 has been seen before in Jubilees (and Pesh.). The second "the word of the Lord came," so close to the first in Gen 15:1, has been perceived as redundant and left out of the narrative. The remainder of the extant text merely reproduces the rest of the Genesis text minus vss. 5-6, which were mutilated before the safekeeping of the present volume in the cave.

The Exegesis of Gen 15: 1-6 in 1QapGen

Several interpretive elements are characteristic of midrashic techniques.¹ The author anticipates the meaning

¹For a study of exegetical techniques in the work as a whole, see Vermes, Scripture, pp. 124-6.

of the whole in introductory remarks.¹ He pays close attention to etymology (as in 'ryry = 'rtly) to deduce additional meanings for a word, a characteristic of midrashic "close reading."² He associates a term with other passages of Scripture in which it also appears (as when inserting "I am with you" from Gen 26:24 or in associating *harbêh* m'od with animal fecundity).³ The presupposition of a rich sense in Scripture allows him the right to double renderings, as 'riri = 'rtly, dl' bryn or mgn = s'd, tqp. And, if my hypothesis to explain 'skrn is accepted, he might have exceeded the bounds of those midrashic techniques by ignoring the established reading of a word in the text.⁴

¹Midrashim often enhance the interest of a given passage with introductory remarks, as "One finds that [such and such suprising thing happened]. How?" Other times they supply a whole context for the passage. See A. Diez Macho, *Exégèse Biblique*, p. 20.

²This and the remaining midrashic techniques in the paragraph are based on *ibid.*, pp. 19,20. Even minor details of a text are given significance, which (as explained there) in later midrash results in practices as *gematria*, *notarikon*, *atbash*, and 'al tigre'.

³This technique was later developed into one of the *middot*, the *gezerah shawah*.

⁴Though the 'al tigre' of the Rabbis superficially resembles a reinterpretation of the consonantal text as we here find in *skr/skr*, it is employed mostly to extract additional meanings from a word (in accordance with the presupposition of a rich sense in Scripture). The formula itself, "do not read A, but read B" acknowledges that the established (and therefore primary) reading is, in fact, A. But the Apocryphon gives its readers no clues about the fact that the concept of "reward" is present at this point in the narrative.

Theological Ideas

Briefly stated, 1QapGen shows chronological concerns similar to those of Jubilees in an introductory insertion,¹ amplifies the self-predication of the Lord that introduced the oracle to Abraham, and avoids the mention of 'gr (i.e., reward).² Brief comments on these follow presently.

The chronological insertion

The non-sectarian chronological note is subordinated to a call to reflect on God's providential leading during those ten past years: Abram should reflect ("look," 22.27) on the fact of his continuous prosperity over the years since obeying God's call. This foreshadows, by divine interpretation, still more prosperity to come.

The remarkable insight preserved by the midrashic author here is that the oracle of Gen 15:1 is not just a detached, isolated prediction about the future. Rather, God's words interpret for Abram the meaning of his previous life in terms that can also apply to the future. The

¹The coincidences between Jubilees and the Genesis Apocryphon have been interpreted as the result of both compositions drawing from a tradition of a previous age (G. Vermes, Scripture, p. 123), or of the "great affinity" of "their ideological backgrounds" (S. Lowy, The Principles of Samaritan Bible Exegesis [Leiden: Brill, 1977], pp. 32ff). Detailed coincidences are inventoried by VanderKam, Textual and Historical Studies, pp. 277-80.

²This remains true whatever be the right transcription and explanation for 'sprk/'skrn. See analysis above.

author has seen in the foregoing prosperity of Abram the same message through providence that he now receives verbally through prophecy. The revelation of the future is thus rooted in a "revealed history" of the past, and the oracle is an illuminating mirror, not merely a magical crystal ball.

The expanded self-predication
of the Lord

In keeping with his style, which proceeds from explanation to quotation, and from the general to the particular, the author introduces in the insertion "I am with you" a promise that summarizes and covers the remaining points: support and strength, shield and defenses, increase in cattle and wealth. Hence, the call to reflect on God's providence seems to express the author's understanding of the oracle as a whole.

Fitzmyer has observed that here

God's words to Abram make no allusion to the subject matter of Gen 14, his victory over the four kings. God merely recalls his own favor and benevolence toward Abram and promises him further wealth. How different these few lines are from the lengthy insertion which one finds in the Targums at this point. The latter try to establish Abram's merit before God, so that he will have some basis for the declaration of uprightness in Gen 15.6.¹

However, though in this "favor and benevolence" the military victory is not explicitly mentioned, it is not necessarily ignored either. It just blends with the whole

¹Genesis Apocryphon, p. 163.

of the foregoing prosperity.

This is relevant to the exegesis of the Genesis text even today. With the perspective of Genesis Apocryphon, neither Gen 14 nor other previous chapters need to be ignored to furnish the adequate background of Gen 15:1, as some modern interpreters felt forced to do.¹ All those chapters say essentially the same thing: a life under God gives no motive for fear.

The absence of "reward"

It is highly unlikely that the author did not know the true Hebrew sense of *šākār*. The term is too frequent in the OT (fifteen times in the Pentateuch alone) and the author too knowledgeable for such an ignorance to take place.² A mere 'al tigre' cannot adequately explain it.³ More probable is that the avoidance of the term was deliberate.

When set against the simple rendering of the term in Jubilees, this suggests that theological reflection on the subject of reward on the basis of this passage is now

¹Among interpreters that reject the connection one can cite Skinner, ICC 1:278: "The attempts to establish a connexion with the events of ch. 14 (Jewish Comm. and a few moderns) are far-fetched and misleading." Cf., however, the exegesis in the next chapter.

²Even if his Hebrew was insufficient, the root *škr* is also employed in Aramaic in the sense of "reward." Cf. *škr*', "rewarder" in Cook, Glossary, s.v.

³See above note on exceeding the bounds of the midrashic techniques.

mounting, whether in the theological circle of the Genesis Apocryphon author, or in other communities which prompt him to react. Reinterpretations are anything but fickle or gratuitous in midrash.¹

On the other hand, he does stress that by following God's summons one arrives at good results. Notice the insistence on the events associated with the departure from Haran, 1QapGen 22.28,29. This is evidence that he would not object absolutely to the idea of rewards, but that his was a non-legalistic one, since it is not associated with notions of deserts, as Fitzmyer already intimated on more general grounds.²

According to Vermes, the Apocryphon "describes Abraham's reward as an earthly one." But it is Abraham's "increase" (harbêh = ysgwn) in wealth, not the reward as such, that which is conceived as earthly. Though it is fair to say, with Vermes, that the author "appears not to be very preoccupied with the after life,"³ we should remember that he might have merely not seen in this text an opportunity to express his concern on the subject.

¹Unusual reinterpretations usually signal a specific reactive concern, often halakic or theological. See Vermes, Postbiblical, pp. 74ff, 86ff; A. G. Wright, "An Investigation of the Literary Form, Haggadic Midrash, in the Old Testament and Intertestamental Literature" (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1965), pp. 140-1.

²See paragraph cited above.

³Vermes, Scripture, p. 121.

Summary

Essentially, the Genesis Apocryphon proposes an understanding of Gen 15:1-6 based on a "saving history" that preceded the oracle. The covenantal awareness of the author is expressed through this "saving history," which is integral to covenant formularies. It stresses God's protection, even more markedly than Jubilees.

But in contrast to the latter, the author shows himself sensitive to the issue of the reward of Abraham by refusing to deal with it in his paraphrase, or even render it literally. We should, then, watch for further developments in this direction in the next documents.

The Hellenistic Writers

Scope

Because of Charlesworth's redefinition of Pseudepigraphical literature, several short or fragmentary works of Hellenistic authors have already been covered under the former heading (see above). What remains to be studied are the major authors, Philo and Josephus. On account of the broad relevance of their writings for several fields of research, a general introduction to their works cannot be attempted here. Some studies dealing with the relationship between these authors and Biblical exegesis are here indicated instead.

Philo and midrash

Philo has been variously understood as a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, a propounder of a mystical system, an eclectic writer (sometimes stressing his being Philo Judaeus, sometimes Philo Alexandrinus), etc., but essentially he may be considered an exegete.¹ Indeed, the literary form of his works corresponds to an exegetical exposition of the kind utilized in the Alexandrian synagogue:

Il en reproduit d'une manière parfaitement fidèle la démarche caractéristique dans ses Quaestiones in Genesim et ses Quaestiones in Exodum. Le texte biblique est repris verset par verset. Le commentateur commence par expliquer tout détail ou toute partie du texte qui semble appeler un éclaircissement dans ses données littérales, puis il passe à l'exégèse allégorique.²

The many treatises of Philo constitute a scholarly and literary adaptation of the pattern found in the Quaestiones. The difficulties in the text that is being expounded provide the key to understanding the (often convoluted) progression of thought in Philonic works. Philosophical ideas and allegorical interpretation are not

¹v. Nikiprowetzky, "L'Exégèse de Philon d'Alexandrie," Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses 53 (1973): 323. On general characteristics of Philonian exegesis, see C. K. Barrett, "Interpretation of the Old Testament in Philo," in P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, eds., The Cambridge History of the Bible (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), 1:379-83.

²RHistPhRel, 53: 323.

ends in themselves, but serve the overall aim of explaining the text.¹ Thus, the literary form of Philonian works point to a fundamental exegetical concern.

This exegetical stance is in part related to traditional midrash. Stein found in Philo an historical, simple haggadah, which could derive from Palestinian sources, as distinct from the allegorical, elaborate one.² The relationship of Philo to the midrashic genre has also been studied by Mack,³ Cazeaux,⁴ and others.⁵ The observations of these authors should suffice to justify the present treatment of this author together with other midrashic expositions.

¹Ibid., pp. 324-9.

²E. Stein, Philo und der Midrasch (Giessen: 1931), as quoted in R. Arnaldez, "Introduction Generale" to De Opificio Mundi (Paris: Cerf, 1961), pp. 87-88.

³B. L. Mack, "Exegetical Traditions in Alexandrian Judaism: A Program for Analysis," Studia Philonica 3 (1974-5): 71-112.

⁴J. Cazeaux, "Aspects de l'Exégèse Philonienne," in J.-E. Menard, ed., Exégèse Biblique et Judaïsme (Strasbourg: Faculté de Theologie Catholique, 1973), pp. 108-15.

⁵Additional bibliographic references can be obtained from the work of V. Nikiprowetzky, Le Commentaire de l'Ecriture chez Philon d'Alexandrie (Leiden: Brill, 1977); and J. Cazeaux, La Trame et la Chaine, ou les Structures litteraires et l'Exégèse dans cinq des Traités de Philon d'Alexandrie (Leiden: Brill, 1983).

On Gen 15:1

The only citation of Gen 15:1 in Philo's extant works appears in Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres sit (Heres).¹ It is actually a cross-reference:

In the preceding treatise we have discussed as carefully as was possible the question of rewards (ta peri misthôn). Now our task is to inquire who is the heir of divine [realities] (pragmatôn). [For] (gar), when the Sage heard the oracular promise to this purport, "Thy reward shall be exceedingly great," he answers with the question: "Master, what wilt Thou give me? I [am passing away] (apolyomai)² childless. The son of Masek, she who was born in my house, is this Damascus Eliezer." And again he says: "since Thou hast given me no seed, he that was born in my house shall be my heir?"³

We do not know for sure which is the "preceding treatise" Philo speaks of. Manuscripts usually have De Migratione Abrahami (Migr) just before Heres. It has been suggested that this is the treatise in mind, since it deals

¹See J. Leisegang, "Index Locorum Veteris Testamenti quos Philo in libris suis graeca lingua scriptis aut adfert aut interpretatur," in L. Cohn, ed., Philonis Alexandrini Opera quae Supersunt, vol. 7 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1926), p. 30. There is also an allusion in Heres 25-26, discussed below, identified in J. Allenbach et al., eds., Biblia Patristica: Supplement Philon d'Alexandrie (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1982), p. 40.

²Older but textually less reliable editions read apeleusomai instead. See the reasons for the adoption of the alternative reading in the editions quoted below.

³Translation of F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Philo, (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1932) 4: 285, except for the bracketed alterations which we introduce together with the original term. Their justification and relevance are discussed in the analysis below.

at length with divine "gifts" (dōrea).¹

There are strong reasons to reject such a suggestion, however. One reason concerns Philo's distinction between "gift" and "reward" in Heres 26.² In this context, just as in section 1, Philo alludes to Gen 15:1.³ It is not likely, therefore, that the corresponding treatise would use dōrea instead of *misthos*: in such a case Philo would hardly have inserted this terminological distinction, which is entirely incidental to its context, in Heres.

The other reason is structural, and arises from a comparison of the way the Gen 15 text is handled in both

¹On this suggestion, see M. Harl, "Introduction," in her edition of *Quis Rerum Divinarum* (Paris: Cerf, 1966), p. 18, n. 1. Colson and Whitaker, *Philo*, 4:285, briefly acknowledge the same facts in a footnote.

²He places in Abram's mind the following thoughts: "Who am I, that You should make me to partake of conversation (lit. "that you should share word with me" [*hina sy moi logou metadōs*]), that You should set a reward (*misthos*) for me, which is a more perfect good than both a grace (*charis*) and a gift (dōrea)?" The distinction is therefore explicit.

³This is clear from the allusion to *misthos* in the passage quoted in the preceding footnote. Also, though *logos* has been there understood by most translators to refer to the faculty rather than the act of speech, as in the preceding section (25), such enabling for speech, according to Philo, was obtained by means of the oracle itself (24, end). The "sharing of word" is listed in 26 together with other aspects of God's oracle as the basis for this enabling, so it is not identical with the latter. We have kept, accordingly, in the previous footnote the more normal sense of *logos* as "talk" (Liddell and Scott, s.v. *logos* section VI a). Thus Heres 26 speaks about the dialogue of Gen 15:1-6 and not about a general "faculty of speech."

treatises.¹ The odds are, then, that Philo devoted a whole treatise to this verse, one which is no longer extant. That the lost treatise contained an extended treatment is not surprising given the theological importance of its topic, the subject of "rewards." Philo often uses a verse as a springboard for a protracted philosophical or theological discussion.

We cannot retrieve the entire content of the lost treatise.² We can, however, draw some reasonable inferences from clues in the extant treatise (Heres). In the introductory paragraph Philo justifies his choice of the topic--"who is the heir to the divine realities"³--by

¹Migr does not even quote Gen 15:1. The first paragraph of Heres 1 (quoted above) clearly states that Gen 15:1 has received in the "preceding treatise" the same kind of treatment that the rest of the chapter receives in Heres, i. e. a detailed (ep'akribeias, lit. "with minuteness," see Liddell and Scott, Lexicon s.v. akribeia) commentary, in which the whole text of Gen 15 is expounded at length, bit by bit. The only exception has been vs. 1. But since this verse is integral to the narrative and included with the latter in all divisions of the Biblical text, ancient or modern, it is highly unlikely that Philo would have omitted it in his plan for the exposition.

²S. G. Sowers, The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews (Richmond: J. Knox, 1965), pp. 32 ff., has shown that Philo can interpret the same passage in different and contradictory ways. However, since the lost treatise and Heres formed one continuous commentary of Gen 15, we do not need to fear radical differences in interpretation. Notice that Heres refers the reader to the lost treatise on this point.

³The usual sense of pragma in Greek is "act," but in Philo, just like in Plato's Cratylus 391b, 436a, etc., it is the opposite of onomati (Mut 2), i.e., the opposite of "in name only," thus "fact, reality". See Liddell and Scott, Greek English Lexicon, s.v. "pragma," section II 2.

the concatenation of ideas in the Biblical text. From his argument it is possible to infer that the lost treatise concluded that the "reward" of Gen 15:1 alluded to "divine realities."¹ Later in Heres he qualifies those same realities as "immaterial" or "incorporeal" (*asômata*, 63). Shortly afterwards he employs the expression "divine goods" (*agathôn*, 69).

These clues point to De Praemiis (i.e., "On the prizes," Praem) for further inferences on the content of the lost treatise. Praem holds that Abraham typifies a particular kind of man "who has sincerely believed in God" and consequently "has learned to disbelieve in all else," "to whom it is given (*exegeneto*) to gaze and soar beyond not only material, but all immaterial (*asômata*) things, and to take God for his sole stay and support."² In view of the parallels in Heres, it seems likely that Abraham's *misthos* was the privilege of seeing by faith things not otherwise visible.³ For Philo faith is "non pas le

¹Philo points out that as soon as Abraham was promised a "reward," he inquired about the "heir." It is by reason of this sequence of thoughts, he says, that we are justified in dealing with the question of who is the heir to the "divine realities."

²Praem 28-30, chap. 5.

³In Praem, the "prize" for Abram is "faith" (27, ch 4), just like "joy" is Isaac's and "the vision of God" Jacob's. What is given him, however, includes to "gaze" upon "all incorporeal things." He may have related this to his conception of the highest good, the sight of God (Praem 31-35). Indeed, the last lines quoted above from Praem sound very much like the reiterated discussions of

fondement premier de la vie religieuse, mais au contraire sa fin, son but."¹ Thus the vision of spiritual realities by faith could well be conceived of as a reward to be received at maturity in the religious experience.²

Exegesis of Gen 15:1 reconstructed
from Praem and Heres

The quotation of Praem above can be independently related to Gen 15:1-6.³ Indeed, the statement that to Abraham was given "to gaze and soar" sounds like an oblique allusion to a traditional exegesis of Gen 15:1-6, according to which Abraham was lifted above the skies when invited to

Abraham's trust in God that accompany his citations of Gen 15:6 (Quod Deus 4-6, Migr 43-46, etc.).

¹Schlatter, Der Glaube im Neuen Testament (Leiden, 1885), pp. 55-105, as quoted in E. Brehier, Les Idées Philosophiques et Religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie (Paris: J. Vrin, 1950), p. 223. See also Mut 181-7, esp. 186: the faith of Abraham at Gen 15 and 16 was still imperfect.

²Barring this connection between Heres and De Praemiis, the misthos might have been conceived as the spiritual realities themselves, in which "the sage" is made somehow to partake. In any case, we are dealing with a metaphysical interpretation.

³Since in this paragraph (Praem 28-30) he is dealing specifically with the prize given Abraham (while in other sections he deals with the prizes of Isaac and Jacob, cf. Praem 27, 31ff., 36ff.), Gen 15:1-6 could hardly have been absent from his mind. Also, his notion that "he who has sincerely believed in God has learned to disbelieve in all else" reappears in Heres as the exegesis of Gen 15:6. Besides, taking God "for his sole stay and support. . . with an unswerving faith" is also reminiscent of Gen 15:1 (cf. the exegesis in 1QapGen, s^cd wtqyp) and Gen 15:6.

contemplate them.¹ This exegesis rests on a lexicographical theory of the content of *nbt*.²

Thus, since for Philo, as for Platonists in general, "heaven" is the locus of "incorporeal things,"³ and we read in *Praem* about "soaring and gazing over immaterial things," he probably derived this idea from Gen 15:5 through the traditional exegesis that had Abraham soaring and gazing at the heavens from above. This in turn would explain why, both in *Heres* and *Praem*, he conceives Abraham's reward as the privilege of contemplating heavenly things.⁴ However, in *Heres* he does not utilize the terminology of "looking from above."⁵

¹"Gaze and soar" (*hyperhoraô*, *hyperkryptô*) are literally "look down upon" and "overtop"; see Liddell and Scott, *Dictionary*, under the respective entries. This implies a vantage point from above, and matches the tradition in Num. R. 2.12: "R. Judah, son of R. Simon, citing R. Hanin, who heard it from R. Johanan, said: We may infer that the Holy One, blessed be He, lifted him [Abraham] up to a position high above the vault of the sky . . . [Gen 15:5 quoted]." H. Freedman and M. Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah* (London: Soncino, 1939) 5: 42. This traditional exegesis of Gen 15: 5 appears also, in an abridged form, in Gen. R. 49.12 (= *Midrash R.* 1: 368).

²"The expression *habet* (look), said R. Samuel son of R. Isaac, is addressed only to the one who is placed above an object, as it is said: Look from heaven, and behold (Ps 80:15)." Num. R. 2:12.

³*Heres* 76.

⁴The proximity of the promise of reward (15:1) to God's taking Abraham out and commanding him to look at the heavens (15:5) can easily account for this interpretation.

⁵He does say that heaven is the "treasury of divine realities [*theiôn agathôn*]," the contemplation of which is Abraham's recompense (*Heres* 76). He also says that Abraham

Even so, it is clear that Philo shows acquaintance with an exegesis of Gen 15:1-6 that connected the faith in God (15:6) with God's self-revelation as *mgn* and support (15:1), and that utilized the grammar of *nbt* to argue that Abraham looked at the heavens from above. Philo's conception of the reward at Gen 15:1 as a *visio beatifica* thus appears to derive from an interpretation of the context at hand in Genesis, especially the command to look at the heavens (Gen 15:5).

On Gen 15:2-6

The detailed treatment in Heres opens with a transitional passage that must have originally joined the interpretation of Gen 15:1 to that of Gen 15:2ff.

We have already seen that his reason for discussing "who is the heir of the divine realities" is that Abraham himself raised the question. Philo, as other writers of his time,¹ detects here the idea that the rewards themselves demand that Abraham should have an heir, or else they are meaningless. Philo infers this point from the juxtaposition of ideas in the Bible text: since Abraham

"extends his vision to the ether and the revolutions of the heaven" (Heres 79). But he uses throughout his commentary of the passage the verb *anablepō*, "look up." This is probably due to the fact that he has adopted the LXX as the text for his commentary. For him, the direction in which one looks might have been a minor point: what is important is to have a "soul that delights in the vision," not of "things of the earth," but of God himself (Heres 78-9).

¹See Josephus, *Ant.* 1:181-183.

raises the question about the heir as soon as he hears about rewards, Philo assumes that the rewards are to be inherited and proceeds to discuss who is the rightful heir.¹

Due to the detailed character of Heres and to its long allegoric homilies, we summarize the exposition of Gen 15:2-6 under the corresponding biblical lemmata.

[And Abraham said]: That he spoke at all after God's revelation may be surprising but agrees well with the demeanor of a true sage, who should be just as daring as he is respectful (3-30).

Lord, what will you give me?: The question means both "what else could you give me?" (expressing gratitude for the abundant material blessings, 31,32) and "what, in fact, will you give me?" (expressing longings for spiritual blessings, superior to the material goods received, 33-39).

The son of Masek (LXX reading): Masek is mašseq, root nšq, "kiss," mere outward expression of affection and not love per se; as such it represents the involvement in worldly matters, which are never the true love of a sage (40-53).

Damascus: Or rather, damsaq, "blood of bag": animal or

¹Notice the temporal adverbs in his exposition, here emphasized together with the key ideas reward and heir: "Now our aim is to investigate who is the heir to the divine realities [=rewards]. For when . . . the sage heard this expression: 'Your reward' . . ., he then answers with the question . . . will he be my heir?"

sensitive soul, the "life" that according to Lev 17:11 resides in the blood (54-57), which is in need of:

Eliezer, i.e., 'eli- 'ezer, "God's help" (58-65).

This will not be your heir: This "blood" soul cannot inherit the promised spiritual realities (66-68), such inheritance can only be accomplished by the soul that has abandoned bodily concerns and the deceptions of sensation and verbalism (69-75).

Look up at the heavens: Look far from misleading earthly knowledge and concern. Heaven is the treasury of divine realities, and their heir is whoever looks up to them, as Abram is advised to do (76-80).

Took (exegagen) him outside: Though *exagô* means "draw out" by itself, there is no redundancy in adding "outside." One can in certain circumstances be both inside and outside, but here the Scripture means that God took Abraham wholly outside of fleshy, sensuous, and verbal deceptions (81-85).

So shall your offspring be: As heavens are, in orderliness and luminousness (86-89).

Abram believed God: The imputation of righteousness (*logisthenai tèn pistin eis dikaiosynên autô*) to Abraham was both deserved and reasonable. Deserved, because though no one is expected to disbelieve what God Himself states, and therefore to believe in such circumstances is merely natural (*akolouthon tē physei*), still to believe in

Him alone, as Abraham did, i.e., in Him but not in anything else, is not easy for mortals accustomed to be guided by the senses. Reasonable, too, because it is right and just (*dikaïos*) to have a pure faith in God, and so his faith was correctly evaluated as righteousness (*dikaïosynē*) (90-95).

Philonian exegesis of Gen 15:1-6

Philo's exegetical techniques differ considerably from other midrashim of the period. These rewrite the Bible, while Heres is a composition about the Bible text. Thus its basic interpretative procedures are familiar to modern readers.

Common exegetical procedures

Linguistic elucidation. Philo gives etymologies for all proper names that occur in the section, other than Abraham,¹ and considers them significant for the context, as if intentionally created by the Bible author.²

The validity of the translations, however, is

¹This, however, he etymologizes abundantly in other passages: Abr 82, Cher 17, Mut 66, etc.

²This is characteristic of his allegorical exegesis. See J. Cazeaux, "Aspects de l'Exegese Philonienne," p. 108. On the more difficult question of the extent of Philo's knowledge of Hebrew, see Nikiprowetzky, Le Commentaire chez Philon, pp. 50-81, and the authors therein reviewed. For this analysis, it is sufficient to notice that, indeed, only proper names are discussed with (an implicit) reference to the Hebrew original. When the Greek OT text itself provides a clue to the meaning, he does not omit the reference (e.g., Eliezer, Ex 18:4, Heres 59).

uneven.¹

Specifications. Philo specifies that which the expounded text had left open or vague,² even though sometimes his interpretation runs counter to the immediate context.³

Attentive Remarks. Philo draws the attention of the reader to features that otherwise could remain unnoticed.⁴

¹Masek ="kiss" is not unreasonable, though maššeq as such is unattested in the OT, and Eliezer ="God's help" is obviously correct in general terms. But Damascus = "blood of bag" is strained: the required vocalization (damsaq) differs from both that given in the LXX (Damaskos) and (presumably) that used in Hebrew (damešeq). It seems possible only starting from an ascetic equation of the despised body with "a bag" (sc. of disgusting guts and other viscerae). He alludes to this repulsion when he says that the expression is "straightforward" (euthybolôs, 54), which implies that the repulsive "bag" was for him a fair description of the body.

²E.g., he interprets what in "what will you give me?" as "what else" and "what, in fact." He sees in this (soul: the animal or sensitive soul) will not be your heir the implication "but this other soul (the superior or spiritual soul) will be."

³Thus, so will be your offspring must mean "so (as the heavens) in brightness, so in orderliness." The immediate context counsels the interpreter to understand "so (as the stars) in number." But there are precedents. Notice Dan 12:3: "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." For the influence of Dan on the interpretation of Gen 15, see the Palestinian Targumim (especially PsJ and N) on Gen 15:11-12; for the idea that in Gen 15:5 the stars are the term of comparison, not just of the number, but also of the exaltation of the Israelites, see Sir 44:21. For other precedents, see our analysis of Jubilees above.

⁴Thus he says that the last word in exegagen exô (= yose' haḥusah), instead of pleonastic, is indispensable because "drawing out" may sometimes be incomplete, and that

Allegorical interpretation

The procedures of an exegete express, to a certain extent, his attitude towards the text.¹ Philonic exegesis corresponds to his conviction that the text is to be decoded--that it speaks about something else while appearing to speak about common subjects. This takes us to the issue of allegorical interpretation.

Allegory, according to the definition which was current in Philo's days, is "a style speaking certain things and meaning something other than what it says."²

Among the features that have been identified as belonging to allegorical exegesis, one can cite from this passage:

(1) the translation of proper names as significant, beyond and apart from the requirements of the narrative,³ (2) a multi-level interpretation,⁴ and (3) grammatical and

faith was considered as righteousness because in fact it is righteous to believe in God in such an exclusive fashion.

¹Thus, the paraphrastic technique in midrashic expositions of other authors implies that the basic task to be fulfilled about the Bible text is to repeat it --though in one's own words, to appropriate it. This is why iQapGen, for instance, could be called a "targum" by some scholars.

²Heraclitus (I A.D.), Homeric Questions, 5, in Sowers, Hermeneutics, p. 11.

³Whatever the validity of the respective translations of Masek, Eliezer, and Damascus, it is very clear that Philo is here imposing on the text abstract ideas which are completely foreign to the text.

⁴E.g., "what will you give me?" both as an expression of satisfaction on the material plane and of dissatisfaction on the spiritual one. One seems to correspond with

syntactical manipulation.¹

The allegorical content of Philo's exegesis of the passage is in evidence: Abraham is the type of virtuous souls who strive after wisdom, his posterity represent the virtues they develop in route (Heres 34-39), the true heir is the soul living a life for God only (45), the promised land is the source of wisdom (314), etc. This is peculiarly Philonic and had little influence in other circles. It lies thus outside our area of interest.

Theological ideas

Since the treatise on 15:1 is lost, we cannot detail the components of Philo's covenantal awareness for this passage. The implications of exclusivity which he attributes here to faith in God, however, do belong to the sphere of covenant.² For a grasp of other themes we need to set Heres against a wider Philonic backdrop.

his concept of the plain sense of the text, the other with the allegorical sense. "Philon ne néglige jamais le sens littéral du texte de l'Ecriture d'une façon systématique et comme à plaisir." Nikiprowetzsky, RHistPhRel 53: 328.

¹This is what Cazeaux terms "the heroic interpretation of grammatical forms and data (coordination and juxtaposition)," Exégèse Biblique, p. 108. The underlying idea is that the answers to the questions raised by the text are close at hand in the passage itself, if rightly decoded. Thus the heir of divine things is he who looks up, as Abraham is advised to do shortly after he enquires about his heir.

²See W. Zimmerli, art. pais theou, TDNT 5: 662 for the correlation between allegiance to a master and withdrawal from all other possible masters. More on this later.

Faith

The Philonic conception of Abram's faith at Gen 15:6 has been explored by other authors. D. D. Sutherland studied it in the context of Hellenistic Judaism,¹ concluding that Philo's concept of faith consists of "an attitude of trust and dependence upon God" and "a life lived not by the lower level of bodily senses but directly depending on God."² He could have supported this conclusion also from Philo's exposition of Gen 15:6, as presently shown.³

The objection Philo deals with in Heres 90, namely, that hardly anybody would refuse credit to God's words, assumes that "faith" is a matter of intellectual assent. Philo answers that one normally believes in riches, glory, social influences, etc. so the contrasting faith of Abraham in God is worthy of the praise it receives in the text. This answer, consciously or not, changes the focus from intellectual assent to trust and reliance, because riches

¹Sutherland, "Genesis 15:6: A Study in Ancient Jewish Interpretation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982), p. 115, blames the LXX translators for choosing *logizomai* as the equivalent of *ḥšb* (an inculcation which is not entirely fair, as shown by Seybold in *TWAT* 3: 243-261). But Sutherland, "Gen 15:6," p. 124 and n. 34, also finds that Philo uses the Greek term to refer to the "inestimable rationale of God" and therefore "a legalistic sense [of the term] is not a concern" for his "understanding of Gen 15:6 and Abraham's faith."

²Ibid., p. 121. He seems to follow mainly A. von Schlatter, Der Glaube im Neuen Testament (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1885), pp. 61-71; 575-81.

³He prefers to quote Heres 85.

and social influences are not intellectual propositions, but grounds for reliance.

On the other hand, both the objection and the answer assume that Abram's act of believing was certainly meritorious. Indeed, it was a work, "the work of a high and Olympian understanding" (Heres 93).¹

Other allusions to Gen 15:6 in the Philonic corpus need not concern us in detail because they do not appear in an expository context that comprehends the whole of Gen 15:1-6. According to Sutherland's conclusions, those other employments generally express Philo's conviction that Abraham lived by the higher laws of nature.²

Rewards

That which Philo conceived as Abraham's reward, *visio beatifica*, is of extreme importance to him.³ This conception is obviously related to the metaphysical outlook

¹pace Sutherland, "Gen 15:6", p. 133. His contention that this is not a punctiliar act, but refers to the life work of Abram as a whole, is nonetheless acceptable. Cf. Abr 262-5.

²Ibid., pp. 125-135. A study of the relationship between revealed and natural law according to Philo is found in Sowers, Hermeneutics, pp. 44-8; Brehier, Idees, pp. 11-35 and works therein cited.

³Philosophy is "nothing else but to desire to see things exactly as they are" (Conf 20, 97). This ability defines true Israel (etymologized as "seeing God," Heres 78), who has its eyes fixed on the "manna" (allusion to Num 11:5-6) of wisdom (191), not on the "onions" that provoke tears and impede clear vision (79-80)--material things. Highest among desirable things to see is the Existent Himself (Vita Cont 2, 11-12).

of Philo. Though radically different from other Jewish ideas of reward, it is not utterly devoid of points of contact.¹

The other-worldly interpretation of reward in the lost treatise and *Vraem* should not lead one to think that Philo did not conceive of rewards in this world. A tractate like De Providentia (Provid) abundantly attests that he did.

According to H. A. Wolfson, he held essentially the same doctrine of providential rewards that we find in Rabbinical sources. Cautionary notices on parallels of this kind have appeared,² and can also be applied here. Wolfson saw in *Provid* 2, 54 the idea that if some righteous men suffer, it is only because they are not perfectly righteous (*Provid* 2, 54).³ Even a cursory reading of his

¹God's promises to Abraham were extremely important for Israel's self-identity (as already in Gen 12:2, Exod 3:15, Deut 7:8, etc.). It was only natural, then, that the reward were interpreted as a legacy for future generations, and not as a few more heads of cattle in Abraham's herds or the like. Philo's understanding, though diverse, also conceived Abraham's reward as transcending his natural life.

²S. Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1956), pp. 203-211. Note, however, the refusal to disclaim the presence of all Palestinian traditions in Philo, p. 210.

³He compares that to the concept imbedded in bBerakhot 7a: "A righteous man who prospers is a perfectly righteous man. The righteous man who is in adversity is not a perfectly righteous man. The wicked man who prospers is not a perfectly wicked man; the wicked man who is in adversity is a perfectly wicked man." This Talmudic text

evidence. however, shows that the parallels are strained and the connections tenuous, if present at all.¹

On the other hand, a Philonian text, if genuine, does indicate that God punishes with suffering even a few misdeeds of the righteous, and rewards well even a few good actions in the wicked.² This would furnish an interesting parallel to some Rabbinic texts to be introduced below,

appears at the end of a debate initiated by R. Johanan. He held another explanation for the conundrum, allegedly revealed as a special favor to Moses: "The righteous man who prospers is a righteous man son of a righteous man; the righteous man who is in adversity is a righteous man son of a wicked man." According to Wolfson, Johanan's view is also reflected in Philo. See H. A. Wolfson, Philo, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: University Press, 1947), 2: 292 and references in n. 57.

¹Provid 54, for instance, answers an age-old contention against providence (namely, that "persons of a fine character" sometimes suffer) with several observations. These include that we cannot really be sure who is of "fine character" and who is not, since "God judges by standards more accurate than any which the human mind employs." Philo, then, seems to be saying that we could be mistaken when attributing righteousness to a sufferer. The Rabbinic "parallel," on the other hand, is much more subtle and specific: the sufferer might be indeed righteous, but still need purging by sufferings. Similarly, the appeal to Leg All II 9, 33f. to attribute to Philo the doctrine of zekut Abbot seems unconvincing. Philo, indeed, says that "God will not let the offspring of the 'seeing' Israel be in such wise changed as to receive his death-blow." But from this hardly follows that the mystical "offspring" is spared because of the merits of his ancestors; rather, Philo's thought seems to be that the same intrinsic value of the spiritual ancestor is also found in the offspring.

²Fragmenta, Richter, 6: 203 in Wolfson, Philo 2: 294. The citation is from St. John of Damascus, Sacra Parallela, title 15, end. Though the genuinity of many fragments there attributed to Philo can be easily verified, this particular fragment does not match any statement in the Philonic corpus we now possess.

when dealing with the Targumim.

In any case, a study of occurrences of the word **misthos** in the Philonian corpus shows that he employs the term in two main senses. It means "hire, wages, economic retribution" in Agr 5, Virt 88, and Spec Leg 4:98, even "bribes" and the like (Flacc 134, 140-1). It also means God's reward for those who "do right" (*ergazomenou ta kala*, Leg All 80), i.e., have good deeds (Somn 2:34), which require firmness, diligence, and related virtues (Somn 2:38).¹ Like the Rabbis and Stoic philosophers, however, he also recommends the practice of virtue for its own sake without thought for the divine recompense (Leg All 3:167),² whether conceived as earthly or other-worldly.³

¹Most of these references occur in the context of the name Issachar, interpreted in Gen 30:18 by Leah as "reward" or "hire."

²Wolfson cites M. Abot 1:3 and 3:15 for the Rabbinic side in Philo 2: 285. For the Greek philosophy side, see also E. Zeller, Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), p. 236 and notes.

³Virtue may be its own reward: Plant 134, 136 contends that just as the reward (profit) of the farmer is allowed for trees starting from the fifth year on, Issachar = reward, the fifth son of Leah, succeeds Judah = thanks-giving, because the act of giving thanks is in itself a reward. God will, in fact, give the greatest rewards to him who performs this kind of service, "for the sake of honoring and pleasing God" (Congr 14, 80), and only second place to the one "hoping to win blessings," with him who is "expecting to obtain remission of punishments" a distant third (Abr 128).

Summary

In conclusion, if the metaphysical content of Philo's interpretation is set aside, he fits neatly in a line of exegetical development for the concerned passage. A continuity with previous documents is suggested by his insight on the exclusivity of the faith in God spoken of in 15:6, which matches covenantal conceptions made explicit in those midrashic expositions. On the other hand, its new character shows in connecting two outstanding theological ideas of the concerned passage, "faith" and "reward," with right doing.

Set against the foregoing midrashic interpretations of Jubilees and the Genesis Apocryphon, a development in the exegesis of the passage is then discernable. Jubilees had stressed the passive condition of Abraham in Gen 15:6 as a recipient of God's grace, which the Genesis Apocryphon also emphasized through its interpretive expansion of Gen 15:1. For Philo, instead, the believing attitude of Abraham recorded in 15:6 was one of his many accomplishments, which God promised in 15:1 to reward with the mystical visio which this author perceived in 15:5. Exegesis of Gen 15:1-6 has thus moved towards the idea of deserved rewards for Abraham.

Flavius Josephus

Josephus and midrash

Josephus' knowledge of midrashim has been diversely

evaluated. In spite of numerous studies with other conclusions,¹ Edersheim could still argue in 1882 that Josephus' knowledge of midrash was scanty and superficial.² Later studies, however, have shown beyond a pale of doubt the multiple relationships between the works of the Hellenistic Jewish historian and haggadic, rabbinic, and pseudepigraphical literature.³

A special problem in this area, the possibility that Josephus used a Palestinian form of a targum as a Bible source, is to concern us in the course of the exegetical analysis.

Context

Josephus paraphrases Gen 15 in Ant. 1:183-7. This section of his work has been shown to be much more free in quoting the Bible than the remaining books.⁴

¹See previous studies in the bibliography quoted by M. McNamara, The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966), pp. 23 ff.

²See "Josephus" in William Smith and Henry Wace, eds., A Dictionary of Christian Biography (London:, 1882) 3: 441-460.

³Notably L. Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publ. Soc., 1910-38); B. Heller, "Die Scheu vor Unbekanntem in Agada und Apokryphen," Monatschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums 83 (1939): 170-184; and Vermes, Scripture.

⁴N. G. Cohen, "Josephus and Scripture: Is Josephus' treatment of the Scriptural Narrative Similar through the Antiquities I-XI?" Jewish Quarterly Review 54 (1963-4): 311-332. L. H. Feldman, Josephus and Modern Scholarship

In the tenth chapter of book 1, Josephus deals with Gen 14-17. He has already presented Abraham as a man of uncommon intelligence, who deduced from the irregularity of the movement celestial bodies (not from their regularity) their creation and control by a single God. Now he presents other features of his personality, also selected for their appeal to Graeco-Roman readers. As a clever and determined general he arms his men and falls upon the "Assyrians" in just five nights (1:177), and enjoys a triumphal entry near Jerusalem (1:179). Then,

As for the king of Sodom, he entreated Abraham to keep the spoil, and desired only to recover those of his subjects whom he had rescued from the Assyrians. But Abraham replied that he could not do this and that no further profit should accrue to him from those spoils beyond what would meet his servants' maintenance. However, he offered a portion to his comrades in arms: of these the first was named Eschon, the others Enner and Mambres.¹ (1:182)

As it can be observed in the quotation, this retelling deviates very little from the Genesis account.² The paraphrase of Gen 15:1 follows immediately after this.

Relevant passage

The way in which Josephus presents the passage

(Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1984), p. 129, wonders whether this could not, in fact, be an effect of employing Targums.

¹Translation by H. St. J. Thackeray, Josephus (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1930).

²"Eschon" appears "first" rather than second, as in MT, but so does it also in the LXX; Enner, however, has a Hebrew (ʿānnēr) rather than Greek (Aunan) form.

prompts a discussion here which is very uneven in length, being much longer on Gen 15:1. It was found convenient, therefore, to divide the analysis of the paraphrase into two parts, one for 15:1 and another for 15:2-6.

On Gen 15:1

"God commended his virtue (*aretê*) and said, 'Nay, thou shalt not lose the rewards (*misthous*) that are thy due for such good deeds (*eupragiais*)'" (1:183). Some observations on this important passage are in order.

Here, in contrast to the strictly scriptural account that precedes this quotation, several deviations are glaring.

Omission of self-predication and ~~mn~~. In Gen 15:1, God's oracle opens with encouragement: "Do not fear." In Josephus, no promise is made until after praising Abraham: notice the 1st Aorist Participle Active, *epainesas*, implying that God's commendation preceded the statement on rewards. This is in keeping with the general toning-down of everything theological in Josephus,¹ which is probably related to his chronicler stance,² historiographic models,

¹The divine self-predication of Gen 15:7 is also omitted in the subsequent report of Josephus.

²Cf. his treatment of miracles in the Exodus narrative and footnotes in Thackeray.

and audience considerations.¹

The omission of ~~agn~~ might be related to this downplaying of theological elements or to a different reading. The choice between these options has to wait until more information can be gathered in the course of analysis.

"God praised Abraham's virtue." No hint of praise for Abraham's conduct is given in the Genesis passage. In Josephus, the ground for praise is Abraham's aretê. This, though in classical Greek expressed the worth of an individual according to the national ideal for a man, including courage in war, etc., came to have a moral thrust through the influence of philosophers. In Hellenistic Jewish circles it became synonymous with dikaiosyne = ~~sedeq~~.² In Antiquities, too, it stands frequently for the Jewish ideal of ~~sedeq~~.³

Adversative and negative. While God's praise of Abraham is not given verbatim, divine speech is reported

¹Jews were suspect of religious fanaticism in the eyes of the Graeco-Roman world after the 68-70 A.D. events. According to T. W. Franksman, Genesis and the "Jewish Antiquities" of Flavius Josephus (Rome: Pontifical Bible Institute, 1979), p. 288, "his fear of offending his Roman masters by mention of any kind of eternal Jewish claim to the land Rome then held [is] a weakness [of Josephus] to be overlooked."

²O. Bauernfeind, "aretê" TDNT 1: 457-61.

³Thus, for instance, in 3:97 some Israelites muse that Moses' second 40-day absence from the camp at Sinai could be explained by his piety: "that he should be translated by God to himself by reason of his own virtue (prosousan aretên) was likely enough."

directly starting with *all'ouk apoleis*,¹ literally "but you will not lose" the rewards.²

The phrase *all'ou* occurs opening a nocturnal divine revelation also in *Ant.* 2:172 (Whiston translates it this time as "No, sure"). But it is not merely a meaningless stock formula for opening divine revelations: it does not appear at other theophanies in *Antiquities*,³ and in those where it does occur, an actual adversative sense is discernable.⁴ Thus one should look for similarities between the content of *Ant.* 1:183 and 2:172 (derived from Gen 15 and 46, respectively) to try to explain Josephus'

¹This is to be underlined in view of Josephus' "dislike of the direct discourse" (Franxman, *Genesis and Antiquities*, p. 288). We must also note that Thackeray, in our passage, replaces the indirect discourse in which Josephus couches Abraham's inquiry (Gen 15:2) by a direct one. To avoid unnecessary distractions we have kept Thackeray's translation in these comments.

²This is translated "nay, thou shalt not lose" by Thackeray; "thou shalt not, however, lose" by W. Whiston, trans. *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), p. 34.

³In *Ant.* books 1-4 (the portion that parallels the Pentateuch) divine speeches with another beginning include 1:57, 280, 313, and 2:212.

⁴In 1:45 it stands in opposition to the "strange actions" of Adam, thereby expressing God's surprise; in 1:100 it balances the right to life that God acknowledges in all his creatures. The main text discusses the other two references in which *alla* opens a divine speech. As for human speeches, in 1:288 the *alla* signals, as in God's speeches at 1:45, 183, the transition from indirect to direct discourse, and expresses (as in 1:45) surprise, this time before the amazing beauty of Rachel; Zimri's speech in 4:145 opposes Moses' arguments. Thus, in all cases the *alla* has an actual adversative connotation, and is no mere interjection.

all'ou.

In both cases the phrase appears beginning an interpretive expansion of the Genesis text, which includes the expression 'al-tirâ' (15:1, 46:3), "do not fear," not literally represented by Josephus. In both cases, too, all'ou is followed by encouragement: 1:183 gives the patriarch assurance of reward, 2:172 of protection and help. Since encouragement is frequently attained by recognizing the facts from which fear arises (concessive clause), and then denying the envisioned consequences (adversative-negative clause), all'ou can be explained in these contexts as the sequel to an elliptic or tacit concessive clause in which the motives for fear were stated.¹

In 1:183, however, no mention is made in Ant. of

¹As a matter of fact, in 2:170-1 Josephus does state those motives: there was great prosperity in Egypt (and thus Jacob feared his descendants would abandon the promised land for good), and there had been no explicit divine command to go to Egypt (and thus he feared God's displeasure). These facts were revolving in his mind when he fell asleep (2:171, end). Then God appeared and said: "But it is not fair for Jacob to overlook the God who has become the permanent protector and helper of both your ancestors and afterwards yourself" (2:172; the Greek runs all'ou dikaion, eipen, Iakobô theon agnoesthai ton aei parastatên kai boêthon progonois te tois sois kai met'autous soi genomenon; since the conjunction has been treated somewhat freely in the available English editions we give here our own literal translation). The adversative alla, in this context, has therefore the function of marking a contrast with, and opposition to, those facts that gave rise to Jacob's fears. They should not (ou) lead to overlooking God's previous and continuing protection. Such an overlook is implied in Jacob's fear.

the patriarch's fear. Indeed, it would not sit well with the previous description of Abraham as a fearless hero. But there was in antiquity an interpretation of Gen 15:1 according to which what Abraham feared, at this point, was that he was going to lose his reward. This traditional exegesis occurs as enlightening parallels in the Palestinian Targum¹ and Gen. R. 44:4.² Some interpretation of this kind may be presupposed in Josephus' paraphrase. On the other hand, the parallels should not be pressed too

¹The Palestinian Targumim, in their several forms, preserve an interpretation that envisions Abraham as afraid of losing his future reward, because of all-too-good events narrated in Gen 14, and a divine oracle that includes a concessive conjunction (w'p 'l gb, "in spite of the fact that") opening a protasis ("although I delivered up your enemies"), and its corresponding apodosis which reassures Abraham that his good deeds ('bdyk tby') will not go unrewarded.

²It has the additional feature of a seemingly variant vocalization of mgn: "R. Levi made another comment: . . . just as a shield receives all spears and withstands them, so will I stand by thee. The Rabbis explained it thus: Abraham was filled with misgivings, saying to himself, 'I descended into the fiery furnace and was delivered; I went through famine and war and was delivered; perhaps then I have already received my reward in this world and have nought for the future world?' Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, reassured him: 'Fear not, Abram, I am thy mgn,' meaning, a gift of grace (maggan) to thee, all that I have done for thee in this world I did for nought; but in the future that is to come, 'thy reward shall be exceedingly great.'" If Josephus was following a vocalization of Gen 15:1 that related mgn to the verb mgn, rather than to the root gnn, then the lack of any reference to a shield is readily understandable. And he might have considered that his emphasis on "reward" covered, as appropriately as might be expected from a summary, the idea that God was bestowing a gift (magan) on Abraham.

far.¹ If Josephus is utilizing a previous midrashic interpretation of any kind, then "but you shall not lose" could have been taken directly from that source and the phrase would represent, obliquely, the "do not fear" of Gen 15:1.

If, on the other hand, such a possibility is discarded, then we must explain all'ou in terms of Josephus' text only. In such a case, we should understand the adversative alla as implying "in spite of your virtue, you shall not lose." This may sound difficult, for Abraham's virtue (the closest antecedent noun of alla) seems more apt for the basis, rather than the difficulty, for the bestowal of Abraham's rewards. However, we could understand "in spite of your virtuous renouncing of booty (Gen 14), you shall not lose, etc." This renouncing would then be a particular manifestation of Abraham's arete, the

¹The PTg form of Gen 15:1, as well as Gen. R, contain a marked duality between "this world" and the "future world" which is foreign to Antiquities. According to A. Marmorstein, The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinical Literature (N. York: Ktav, 1968), the Gen. R. text and b. Shabb. 32b "show the Rabbis' view that we might use up the merits in this world which ought to be stored up for the world to come. This leads us to the conceptions of the heavenly treasures." Also, the Gen. R. text contemplated a "gift of grace" idea that is foreign to Josephus, since in this Antiquities passage "er suchte für den Abraham verheissenen Lohn die ihn begründende Leistung, da der Lohn verdient sein muss" (A. Schlatter, Die Theologie des Judentums nach dem Bericht des Josefus [Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1932], p. 39). It is possible that Josephus knew these traditions in a slightly different way, e.g., one that utilized the agn root in articulation with sākār (as in "I am bestowing on you your exceedingly great reward") rather than in contradistinction with the same.

significant and comprehensive usage of which for the OT worthies in Josephus we have already discussed.

But no matter how we explain the implicit concessive clause, it is clear that Josephus, with his adversative and negative phrase, utilizes an exegesis that connects Gen 15:1 specifically with Gen 14. If we understand "in spite of your virtuous renouncement," then Gen 14:21-24 is in view. If, on the other hand, we understand "in spite of your fears," Josephus would be alluding to an exegetical tradition that makes Abraham fear about his rewards because of the all-too-good events of Gen 14. The link between this paraphrase of Josephus and Gen 14 has also been recognized by scholars such as Harold W. Attridge,¹ who notes the unscriptural character of the addition; Schlatter,² who stresses that this is one of the salient *misthos* passages in Josephus; and T. W. Franksman, who emphasizes its connection with the "generous gesture at the end of the war of the kings."³

"Rewards" in plural. This deviation from Genesis, as also perceived by Attridge, contributes to an emphasis of Josephus on divine retribution.⁴ The multiple eupragiai

¹The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), p. 89, n. 1.

²Theologie, p. 39.

³Genesis and Antiquities, p. 137.

⁴Interpretation, p. 89, n. 1.

of Abraham must be fairly met each by its corresponding reward.

Rewards earned by good deeds. Since Josephus has been magnifying the figure of Abraham for a long time in *Antiquities*, it is unclear precisely what is encompassed by *toioutos eupragias*. The noun *eupragia*, used by Josephus elsewhere for achievements and success,¹ is probably to be understood here in a sense closer to its obvious etymology ("good action"),² as the translators have recognized. The adjective *toioutos* is not merely deictic, as Thackeray's English equivalent "such" is sometimes,³ but expresses admiration for the quality of the noun thus qualified.⁴ Abraham's renouncing the booty is clearly not a "good deed" envisioned here. Though a direct connection of this oracle with the events at the end of Gen 14 has clearly been made by Josephus, the renouncing of booty may be the difficulty

¹Mostly military. See K. H. Rengstorff, ed., A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus (Leiden: Brill, 1975), s.v. "eupragia".

²Cf. the distinction between mere success and real *eupragia* as "good deeds, services" in Plato, *Alcibiades* 1.116b, in Liddell and Scott, *Dictionary*, s.v. This has been recognized by the translations: "good deeds" (Thackeray) and "glorious actions" (Whiston).

³Though Attridge is probably well aware of this nuance, his sentence "'such good deeds' of Abraham as have been recorded" (*Interpretation*, p. 89) could leave with the reader the wrong impression that "such" is merely deictic.

⁴Thus Liddell and Scott, *Dictionary*, s.v. "*toioutos*," points out that it has "frequently" the implications "so good, so noble, so bad, etc."

that stands in the way of God's reward, but not the basis for the latter. It could refer to Gen 14 as a whole, but then there is no clear reason to stop here. The whole of the *aretê* of Abraham is thus probably alluded to.

In any case, both the plural of "rewards" and the emphasis on "such astounding good deeds" reinforce the probability that Josephus was following an exegetical tradition similar to that of the Palestinian Targum and Genesis R., where the 'bdyk tby' figure prominently.¹

In summary, Josephus' paraphrase of Gen 15:1 omits the important self-predication of the Lord. It also either omits or reads differently His promise of protection. It concentrates on an unscriptural praise of Abraham's righteousness and on the promise that each of his admirably good works will receive its reward, apparent difficulties notwithstanding. These features, derived from a specific connection with Gen 14, are not distinctive of Josephus but belong to a traditional exegesis of the passage.

On Gen 15:2 ff.

And when he replied, "What pleasure can those rewards afford, when there is none to succeed to them after me?" (for he was still childless), God announced that a son would be born to him, whose posterity would be so great as to be comparable in number to the stars.

¹It is worth noticing that those points of Gen 15 enlarged on by Josephus (the reward for good works, the dreadful birds of prey) receive also an expanded treatment in the PTg, though the latter also expands on some points passed over by Josephus.

"What pleasure can those rewards afford?" Gen 15:2 is here represented by *tis an eiê charis toutôn tôn mîsthôn*. Thackeray's translation is plausible,¹ and so are other possible renderings. *Charis* often functions as a preposition indicating the aim or objective of something: "for the sake of, on account of," employed often with the genitive case.² As such, it would yield here the sense: "what is the point of those rewards, when there is none to succeed to them after me?" This would be not only more logical but also in line with a competent understanding of the Hebrew idiom in *mah-titten lî* and with an exegetical tradition also attested in 1QapGen, as seen above.

Whatever the correct translation of *charis* here, it is clear that Josephus, as Philo before him, saw the inheritability of those rewards as a sine qua non: rewards without a successor are not only insufficient, they are also meaningless.

Gen 15:2c and 3 are compressed here, but in view of the summary character of Josephus' paraphrase this does not require particular comment.

"God announced." Gen 15:4-5 is also compressed. The promise of a son is introduced as God's "announcement" (ho

¹*Charis* can certainly mean "gratification, delight." And *charis mîsthôn* could be interpreted as a subject-genitival construction: the gratification performed by the rewards.

²Liddell and Scott, Dictionary, s.v. "*charis*," section VI b.

theos . . . katangellei).¹ Josephus does not follow Philo in making Abraham's posterity "as the heavens" in brightness and orderliness; he gives the plain meaning of the Hebrew: "whose posterity would be so great (pollên, 'much') as to be comparable in number to the stars."

Silence on Gen 15:6. Not even a summary, however, is given of Gen 15:6-8. The narrative jumps to 15:9:

On hearing these words Abraham offered a sacrifice to God as bidden by Him. And the sacrifice was on this wise: he took a heifer of three years old, a she-goat of three-years old and a ram of the same age, with a turtle-dove and a pigeon, and, at God's bidding, divided them in twain, save the birds which he divided not. (1:184)

This detailed account of the "sacrifice" (Josephus never speaks of a Covenant)² contrasts with the silence in which he skips the momentous passages of Abraham's faith and accreditation of righteousness (15:6), the divine self-predication of 15:7 or the request of a sign in 15:8. A short allusion to 15:7 could, but barely, be present in Ant. 1:187: "Thereon God bade him assured that, as in all else he had been led out of Mesopotamia for his welfare, so children would come to him." If so, it is conflated with 15:18-21.

This silence and toning-down of the covenant is probably to be explained along the same lines as the

¹His heathen audience was probably more used to "announcements" (oracles) than to intimate interpersonal language such as "promise."

²Attridge, Interpretation, pp. 80-1.

omission of the opening divine self-predication of Gen 15:1 (see above). Franxman says that these omissions are "due perhaps to the doubts expressed by Abraham at this juncture."¹ This, however, applies better to the omission of the material in 15:7-8 than to that of 15:6.

In summary, Josephus' paraphrase of Gen 15:2 ff. interprets Abraham's response to the oracle as implying that the rewards are meaningless if non-inheritable, reports summarily God's promise of a son, and gives the plain meaning of the comparison with the stars. He omits all mention of Abraham's faith and the accreditation of righteousness, as he does with similar material elsewhere.

Josephus' exegesis of Gen 15:1-6

The review of Biblical history for Gentile readers provided by Josephus is primarily apologetical, not theological nor exegetical, in nature.² However, comprehensive studies of Josephus assist in providing a wider backdrop for the present findings.

Franxman basically utilizes, to evaluate Josephus' treatment of Genesis, the categories of expansion, compression, or balanced retelling of the Bible history. From his conclusions, the following points on the Abraham stories are here abstracted:

¹Ibid.

²Bowker, Targum and Rabbinical Literature, p. 31.

Josephus expands on the early life of Abraham (Ant. 1:148-60) and his sojourn in Egypt (1:161-8); compresses the narrative from the separation from Lot up to the stay in Gerar (1:169-212); deals evenly with the birth of Isaac and the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael, inserting then from Gen 25 the list of Ishmael's descendants (1:213-21); expands on the Akedah (1:222-36); and compresses the events from the death of Sarah up to the death of Abraham (1:237-56).¹ Needs of the historiographic style employed by Josephus easily explain his emphasis on the early life of Abraham. For the rest, it was the story in Gen 22, rather than Gen 15, the one which epitomizes the personality of the patriarch.²

We can conclude with Franxman words:

It is hard to give a global characterization of Jos.' method itself ; . . . on the surface, his version of Genesis has some of the ungoverned, creative and slightly erratic aura about it which one frequently perceives in the general style and approach of a Pseudepigraph. . . . Beneath the surface of Jos.' style we have found a far more careful author who is toeing the line of the text of his original quite faithfully and whose alterations may represent exegetical traditions much better thought out than has been heretofore supposed [Emphasis added].³

This conclusion needs to be remembered when advancing from Ant. 1:183-5 to later midrashic works.

¹Genesis and Antiquities, pp. 285-88.

²Cf. similar preferences in Sir 44:20, Wisd 10:5, and James 2:22-3.

³Genesis and Antiquities, pp. 289 -end.

Theological ideas

We have already noted his emphasis on the rewards for Abraham's good works. This expansion appears in spite of the compressed character of this section of his treatment of Genesis. We have also mentioned his omission of all reference to Abraham's faith.

As Attridge shows,¹ there is for Josephus in the life of Abraham a cycle of divine favor, self-denying human response, and more divine favor. Abraham's obedience to God's call is rewarded, *inter alia*, with the victory of Gen 14; Abraham renounces the fruits (booty) of that victory, and God "praises his virtue" reassuring him of his reward. This includes a legitimate posterity (Isaac), which Abraham renounces in the Akedah, to receive even more favor of God. Thus not only obedient deeds of Abraham are rewarded but also his virtuous renouncement of the rewards.²

The patriarch's acknowledgment of God's favor and grace appears in an Akedah passage: "God . . . claims from us [the sacrifice of Isaac] in return for the gracious favour (*eumenês*) He has shown me as my supporter and ally (*parastatês kai symmachos*)" (1:229). This passage is relevant here because it is reminiscent of Gen 15:1,

¹Interpretation, p. 89.

²In Rabbinical thought "merits are to be obtained by not using the rewards we are entitled to claim in this world" according to Marmorstein, Doctrine, pp. 19-20, analyzing ySanh 27d and Lev. R. 36.3.

especially in the light of Jubilees and the Genesis Apocryphon.

The phrase **s^cd wtqyp** of 1QapGen 22:31, with its warlike associations in the context of Gen 15:1, matches **parastatēs kai symmachos** closely. Both are hendiadys, and a **parastates**, literally "one standing besides = supporter" is used especially of "a comrade on the flank," just as **s^cd** is both "to prop up, support" and "to assist, help" (as comrades do in battle).¹ **Symmachos**, too, is literally a "comrade of arms" but in Antiquities often stands for "protector."² The word **parastates** also means "a defender" (cf. Jub 14:1).³

All these terms look like paraphrases of **mgn** in Gen 15:1, understood as "protector" rather than "shield," as in Jubilees and Genesis Apocryphon.⁴ The intimate link between Gen 15:1-6 and Gen 14 in early Jewish exegetical traditions (explored above) has probably promoted this kind

¹Jastrow, Dictionary, s.v. "s^cd".

²This is the first time that Antiquities mentions God as **symmachos** of anyone. Afterwards, however, it occurs frequently (e.g., 1:268, 2:278, 334).

³Liddell and Scott, Dictionary, s.v. "parastates". For Jub 14, see above in the introduction to this chapter. The term **parastatēs**, as **symmachos**, appears here for the first time in Antiquities applied to God. All other occurrences refer to God's promise of assistance to an ancient OT character: to Jacob in Beersheba (2:172), and to Moses in the revelation of the divine name (2:276).

⁴This is in spite of Josephus' possible acquaintance with traditions taking **mgn** as "bestowing." See above.

of paraphrase.¹ In any case, the concept of God as protector, omitted in its expected place, resurfaces here.²

But the explication of "protector" as an "ally" also shows that Josephus thought of the self-predication of God in 15:1 as a metaphor connected with covenantal imagery. The human allies of Abraham, which in Gen 14:13 are called *ba^c*lêy-b*riṭ 'abrām*, appear in *Ant.* 1:182 as "comrades of arms" (*systrateuomenoi*, a synonym for *symmachos*). As already seen, Josephus never mentions the covenant with God for fear of offending the Romans, but the equivalence here made, coupled with the terminology of 1:229, shows that he probably thought of God's relationship to Abraham as a *ba^c*l-b*riṭ* too.

Though Josephus acknowledges God's grace (disguised under the pagan-sounding term *eumēnia*), he emphasizes the human response of devotion (*threskeia*) and obedience.³ The latter, especially, is clear from his avowed purpose for *Antiquities*:

The main lesson to be learnt from this history by any who care to peruse it is that men who conform to the will of God, and do not venture to transgress laws that have been excellently laid down, prosper in all

¹I am indebted to Attridge, *Interpretation*, pp. 88-9, for this connection of "supporter and ally" with the oracle of Gen 15:1-6, though he does not make it explicit.

²For the prominence of the Akedah in Josephus, which draws significant elements of other chapters towards its own area of influence, see above section "Josephus' Exegesis of Gen 15:1-6."

³1:182 ff.

things beyond belief, and for their reward are offered by God felicity; whereas, in proportion as they depart from the strict observance of these laws, things else practicable become impracticable, and whatever imaginary good thing they strive to do ends in irretrievable disasters. (1:14)

Thus, as J. Jervell notices in his paper on the interpretation of Genesis in Josephus,¹ "er will die Geschichte Israels darstellen (1,5) aber dies als ein Plädoyer für das Gesetz." And this--not a vague "natural law" but the special revelation at Sinai--would be of no avail

unless before all else they [the readers] were taught that God, as the Universal Father and Lord who beholds all things, grants to such as follow Him a life of bliss, but involves in dire calamities those who step outside the path of virtue. (1:20)

The law is inextricably bound up with the essence of God (Ant. 20:268).² Therefore,

Our legislator . . . having shown that God possesses the very perfection of virtue, thought that men should strive to participate in it, and inexorably punished those who did not hold with or believe in these doctrines. I therefore entreat my readers to examine my work from this point of view. (1:23)

Not only punishments for disobedience are prominent in Josephus' thought but also bonuses for good actions. Thus, Ant. 8:394 states that Josaphat prospered with

. . . the favour (*eumenes*) and the assistance of the Deity, since he was upright and pious and daily sought

¹"Imagines und Imago Dei. Aus der Genesis-Exegese des Josephus," in O. Betz, K. Haacker and M. Hengel, eds., Josephus-Studien (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), p. 200.

²Ibid.

to do something pleasing and acceptable to God.

This conception of uprightness based on "daily doing something pleasing to God" has been called "für den Pharisäismus typisch."¹ But whatever the sectarian affiliation of this concept, its importance for Josephus is hardly deniable. The emphasis on rewards for good works found in this passage is, then, entirely consistent with the general aim for Antiquities and Josephus' mindset.

Summary

In conclusion, Antiquities provides evidence for a muffled, but still discernable, covenantal understanding of the passage. Missing is a full expression of his ideas on the protection promised to Abraham and on the faith of the latter in the context of Gen 15:1-6. God's promises of protection appear instead in the context of Gen 22. In Gen 15:1-6, Josephus stresses God's reward for right doing to the exclusion of other aspects of the oracle. Compared with the documents studied previously, the paraphrase of Gen 15:1-6 evidences an advanced stage in the progression of Jewish exegesis towards the concept of deserved rewards and nomistic righteousness.

¹A. Schlatter, Kleinere, p. 118. According to K. H. Rengstorff, "Zur Einführung," *ibid.*, p. vii, Schlatter is a specialist: he "hat sich fast sechzig Jahre lang intensiv mit diesem einzigen jüdischen Historiker des Altertums beschäftigt."

The Targums

Most Targums "summarise[d] the traditional and most widely accepted interpretations of Scripture" among Synagogue teachers (Rabbis),¹ and were, by definition,² "at the very center" of Judaism.³

Scope of Literature

Since the term "targum" has been diversely employed,⁴ we need to take it up briefly, to determine the present scope of literature.

By Targum is meant here, as in many specialized works, an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible for liturgical use in a synagogue. This definition excludes: (1) the LXX, for not being Aramaic, even though it had the same purpose and uses the same translation techniques; (2) the Palestinian Christian version of the OT, for being

¹Ibid., p. 14. For the connection with Synagogue teachers, see pp. 11 ff.

²A definition is presently offered; for the central place of targum in Rabbinic Judaism, see R. McNamara, The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch, 2d ed. (Rome: Pontifical Bible Institute, 1978), p. 260.

³Thus we could legitimately place them under the "Rabbinical literature" category. However, it has been argued that their contents may, in the main, predate classical Rabbinical literature (ibid., pp. 3-28, esp. p. 20). Besides, the Samaritan Targum can hardly be "Rabbinical" in any meaningful sense.

⁴The imprecision is decried by Etan Levine, "La Evolución de la Biblia Aramea," in Estudios Bíblicos 39 (1981): 232-3. See also A. Díez Macho, "Le Targum Palestinien," in J.-E. Menard, Exégèse Biblique et Judaïsme (Strasbourg: Faculté de Theologie Catholique, 1973), p. 15.

based on the LXX, even though it is Aramaic; (3) similarly, the Peshitta, made for Christian use. It does include the Aramaic Samaritan version of the Pentateuch (Samaritan Targum).¹

Targums can be classified according to the relative importance of the paraphrastic component in their text. In spite of the implications of a loose employment of the term "targum" in the sense of non-literal translation by some authors, paraphrase is not essential to the concept of Targum (see definition above). However, it is also true that all known Targums do employ paraphrase in greater or lesser degree.²

The most literal Targums are the Samaritan Targum (henceforward STg)³ and Onqelos (TgO).⁴ The rest are Palestinian forms (PTg). The term "Palestinian" is shorthand for "Palestinian Jewish": the Samaritan Targum, of course, is also Palestinian in provenance but rarely lumped

¹Diez Macho, "Le Targum", p. 15. For a similar definition, stressing the requisite liturgical character, see R. Le Déaut, Targum du Pentateuque (Paris: Cerf, 1978) 1: 15-16. It is also implied in McNamara, NT and PTg, pp. 38-45, Bowker, Targums, pp. 1-16, etc.

²Diez-Macho, "Le Targum," p. 15.

³Literalness is valid especially for the "Marqan" form of this version (J). See J. McDonald, The Theology of the Samaritans (London: SCM, 1964) p. 42.

⁴"Tg Onk ist sicher das wörtlichste Tg, es hat aber ebenso interpretative Elemente haggadischer Art." Angerstorfer, Biblische Notizen 15: 57. On the midrashic component of this Targum, see below.

together with the Jewish Targums in targumic studies. Onqelos, on the other hand, has become attached to the Babylonian schools of Jewish learning, though it may have also derived from Palestinian forms, ultimately.¹ We deal with each kind in turn. The general pattern is followed, except for the study of the context of the relevant passage. Since the Targums are, essentially, versions of Scripture, any such study would duplicate, in the main, the contextual study of the Pentateuchal passage presented in the next chapter.

The Literal Targums

Targum Onqelos

The Document

This targum, called by the Rabbis "our Targum" (bQidd. 49a), is named for the translator attributed to it in bMeg. 3a.² For most scholars,³ it is a revision and

¹G. Vermes, "The Targumic Versions of Gen IV 3-16" Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society 3 (1961-2): 98 in R. Le Déaut, Introduction à la Littérature Targumique (Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1966) p. 100, and the latter author, Targum du Pentateuque (Paris: Cerf, 1978), pp. 41-2.

²An explanation for the form Onqelos as derived from Aquilas is summarized in Díez Macho, "Targum," p. 868. This attribution, however, is widely believed to arise from a confusion with the Aquilas that made the literal Greek version of the Pentateuch (cf. yMeg 71c). According to Le Déaut, this is the outcome of a controversy dating from the times of Azariah de Rossi in the XVI century (Introduction, p. 80). A better name would be the Babylonian Targum, since it conforms to the halakah of Babylonian schools and received its final redaction in Babylon.

rewriting, in literary Aramaic,¹ of an old Palestinian Targum, in consonance with the newly fixed consonantal text that would be later identified with the Massoretic Text (MT).² There is consensus on the ancient Palestinian origin of the embedded haggadah.³ It reached its Babylonian form before the third century A.D.,⁴ traveled from Babylon to Palestine and prevailed there after the Arab conquest (though copies of the Palestinian Targum were

³Le Déaut, Introduction, p. 80, quotes E. Y. Kutscher, P. Wernberg-Møller, G. Vermes, and A. Díez-Macho. Many others assume the correctness of this idea, as e.g., Etan Levine, "La Evolución de la Biblia Aramea," Estudios Bíblicos 39 (1981): 233; A. D. York, "The Dating of Targumic Literature," Journal for the Study of Judaism 5 (1974): 50 ff., etc.

¹The employment of this form of Aramaic has played an important rôle in this identification. See Angerstorfer, BN 15: 57.

²Others, noting that it originally contained Babylonian vocalization only, defended a basic Babylonian translation (notably P. Kahle, The Cairo Genizah, Oxford: Clarendon, 1959). The argument of vocalization, however, has been countered by assuming that it was superimposed on a consonantal text originating in Palestine (Díez Macho, "Targum," p. 868). McNamara, in NT & PTg 60 refers to the work of E. Y. Kutscher and P. Wernberg-Møller in support of the Palestinian origin of TgO and against the position of Kahle in this matter. Aberbach and Grossfeld argue that here "the weight of the evidence supports the majority opinion," Targum Onkelos to Genesis (New York: Ktav, 1982) p. 9.

³Persuasive arguments are summarized in Le Déaut, Introduction, pp. 85-7. See also McNamara, NT and PTg, pp. 60, 130-1, 256, 258; and Vermes, Scripture, pp. 181-2.

⁴There is a profuse massorah noting differences between Nehardea and Sura forms of the version, and Nehardea was destroyed by the Palmyran prince Odenatus in 259 A.D. See Díez-Macho, "Targum," pp. 869, 871; Le Déaut, Introduction, pp. 86-7.

still being made in the ninth century A.D.).¹

Due to the official character of this targum, both its manuscripts² and printed editions³ are legion. I have here followed Sperber's edition, paying attention to the variants recorded in its apparatus.

This Targum, long considered to be the literal translation of the Pentateuch par excellence, has been shown to contain substantial doses of midrash, paraphrase and haggadah.⁴ N. Adler asserted that Onqelos incorporates homiletical Tannaitic exegesis.⁵ That Onqelos includes

¹Le Déaut, Introduction, pp. 87-8. For evidence that the penetration of Onqelos in Palestine occurred before the 9th century A.D., see Diez Macho, "Un Manuscrito de Onqelos de Transición del Sistema Palestínense al Pro-tiberiense," Estudios Eclesiásticos 34 (1960): 462 ff.

²A. Diez Macho, Enciclopedia de la Biblia (Barcelona: Garriga, 1963) art. "Tárgum," vol. 6, col. 871.

³Printed editions start as early as 1482 (Bologna), and Polyglot as well as Rabbinic Bibles include its text (R. Le Déaut, Introduction à la Littérature Targumique, Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1966 p. 88; and idem, Le Targum, pp. 20 ff). A. Sperber prepared in 1959 a text based on Yemenite manuscripts, The Bible in Aramaic (Leiden: Brill, 1959). It has not been available to us the edition that A. Diez-Macho supervised for the Madrid Polyglotta (A. Diez Macho, "Tárgum," pp. 870-1), still in preparation (L. Diez Merino, "El Profesor Alejandro Diez Macho y los Estudios Aramaico-Targámicos" Estudios Bíblicos 43 (1985): 31).

⁴"Fast alle Abweichungen von der wörtlichen Lesart des hebräischen Textes sind in Tg Onk bedeutungsvoll und nicht zufällig. Tg Onk, das mit Recht als das wörtlichste aller Tgg gilt, hat Tausende spitzfindiger Abweichungen vom MT." Angerstorfer, BN 15: 58.

⁵Netina Lager, (Wilna: n.p., 1886), introd., pp. 10-20, in P. Doron, "The Methodology of Targum Onkelos," Estudios Bíblicos 43 (1985): 175.

many Palestinian haggadot was stressed in the 19th century by A. Berliner, and in the 20th by G. Vermes, followed by Bowker and others.¹ According to Aberbach and Grossfeld, most Onkelos halakhah and haggadah represent the views of Rabbi Akibah.² But it stays true to its literal appearance even then: it introduces haggadot through subtle alterations in the Aramaic equivalents of the Hebrew.³

Relevant passage

This is here presented in the English translation of Aberbach and Grossfeld.⁴ These authors offer at several points, in addition to their idiomatic main translation, an alternative literal rendering enclosed in parenthesis. In those cases the latter was followed.⁵ For the analysis we utilize their comments as well as those of a former translator, Etheridge.⁶

¹G. Vermes, "Haggadah in the Onkelos Targum," Journal of Semitic Studies 8 (1963): 159-69; J. W. Bowker, "Haggadah in the Targum Onkelos," JSS 12 (1967): 51-65; Diez Macho, Neophyti I: Targum Palestinense, Ms. de la Biblioteca Vaticana, 5 vols. (Madrid and Barcelona, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1968-1978), 1: 99*-106*; M. L. Klein, "Converse Translation: A Targumic Technique," Biblica 57 (1976): 515-37.

²Targum Onkelos, pp. 10ff.

³Diez Macho, "Le Targum," p. 15.

⁴The underlining of deviations from the Hebrew is ours.

⁵Targum Onkelos, pp. 90ff. The alternative translation appears with square brackets.

⁶J. W. Etheridge, The Targums of Onkelos and

1. After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in prophecy, saying, "Fear not, Abram: My Memra shall be your strength, your reward shall be very great."

2. But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, seeing that I go childless, and this manager who is in my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

3. And Abram said (further), "Behold, to me you have not given a child, and behold, a member of my household [is to inherit me].

4. And, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "That one [shall not inherit you], but rather a son whom you will beget--he [shall inherit you]."

5. He then brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "Just so shall be your descendants."

6. And he believed in the Memra of the Lord, and he accounted it to him [as merit].

Came to Abram. Sperber gives in the main text 'm 'brm, which would yield, as in vs. 4, "the word of the Lord was with Abram." This is how Etheridge renders vs. 4,¹ but Aberbach and Grossfeld give "came to" in both places.

In prophecy. Already in the past century Etheridge observed, in a footnote, that the Samaritan Targum is

Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum, from the Chaldee (New York: Ktav, 1968). The work of B. Grossfeld, The Targum Onkelos to Genesis (Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1988), appeared too late for inclusion in the text of the present work.

¹The Waltonian Polyglotta that he was following has a different reading at vs. 1. See apparatus in Grossfeld, Onkelos, p. 70.

identical.¹ Aberbach and Grossfeld point out that "prophecy" is "the nearest non-anthropomorphic equivalent" to vision. Besides the considerations there entertained, one needs to remember that no visual content of Abraham's experience is described in the Genesis text, making "prophecy" less difficult to harmonize with its context than "vision."

My Memra. Etheridge stresses the contrast between the term for "word" at the beginning of the verse (he transliterates it as pithgama) and here (Memra). This circumlocution to express the person and action of God (not just His speech) is customary in the Targums. The most complete work on the Memra is probably that of Muñoz-León.²

Your strength. Aram. tqwp (also translatable "protection"). This is another striking coincidence with the Samaritan Targum (also in Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon and all ancient versions).³ For Aberbach and Grossfeld, "I am a shield to you" is "a strong anthropomorphism" that "had to be avoided by TO." The translation would thus replace the concrete by the abstract. We have already commented on

¹We comment below on this Targum.

²D. Muñoz León. Dios-Palabra: Empleo del Apelativo "Memra de YY" en los Targumim del Pentateuco y su Relación con el Logos de Juan (Rome: Instituto Bíblico Pontifical, 1968).

³This time Etheridge fails to note it.

this idea.¹

Your reward. Etheridge gives "and thy . . . reward." Available printed editions, including the apparatus in Sperber, mention no such conjunction "and" as Etheridge reads here. "Reward" is the expected 'gr in Aramaic, plainly translated and without enlargements.

Childless. Aram. d/bl' wld.² This simple rendering ("I go without a child") of the Hebrew 'ānoḵi hōlēḵ 'ʿriri does not attempt to reproduce the grammatical structure of the original (an adjective, 'ʿriri, modifying the verb hlk) as does the English of Aberbach and Grossfeld,³ perhaps unconsciously influenced by the Hebrew, but chooses a circumlocution instead.⁴ The Pesh rendering is similar (dl' bryn).

Manager. Aram. br prns', not br prgm as Etheridge prints (he translates it "son of business").⁵ The word

¹See above on Jubilees, ad loc.

²The d or b depends on the MS followed; there is no difference in meaning.

³Grossfeld, Ongelos, p. 69, gives more literally "without child."

⁴Jewish Aramaic had 'rry at its disposal, but apparently it was less common than the equivalent phrase.

⁵Jastrow records no prgm, but prgm̄t would indeed mean "business." However, since Walton, whom Etheridge follows (1: viii), has parnāsā' very clearly spelled out, bar phargama probably is a typesetting mistake under the influence of pithgama, five lines above.

prns' is "management,"¹ and "son of management" is idiomatic for "manager." Ongelos, therefore, interprets **mbq** in a way similar to the other Targumim.²

Of Damascus. Aram. **dm̄sq'h**, vocalized **dāmāsqā'āh** in Sperber. Etheridge transcribed "Damasekah," which looks like a proper noun in English, instead of the gentilic "Damascene" or "Damaskan" that properly corresponded.³

Ongelos makes sense of the received Hebrew text for this passage by transforming the toponimic **dammešeq** into a gentilic adjective. It also introduces a demonstrative adjective, "this."⁴

A child. Aram. **wld**. As the Samaritan Targum and Pesh, Ongelos does not give the literal rendering "seed."⁵

¹This and all following mentions of Jastrow are references to his Dictionary, sub voce.

²According to Grossfeld, Ongelos, p. 69 n. 3, this rendering arose from understanding **mbq** as a form of **nšq**. This, in the sense "going to war" is a synonym of **zwn**, which in turn may mean "provide."

³Jastrow asserts that it means "of Damascus" and gives as evidence this very passage.

⁴Aberbach and Grossfeld observe that "this manager who is in my house" is a "somewhat contemptuous treatment of Eliezer" since it implies that he is not **the** manager. They also show that this demotion can be correlated with midrashic statements to the effect that Eliezer was deceitful and "accursed." We would like to point out, however, that once **mbq** was understood as a common noun (instead of the LXX proper noun **Masek**, see above on Philo, ad loc.), the translation "the manager" was not possible, grammatically, since there is no article in **bn-m̄sq-byty**.

⁵This is regular for TgO. See Grossfeld, Ongelos, p. 47 n. 8.

Unlike the former, it does not substitute one metaphor for another but replaces the metaphor *zera'* by its non-figurative content.

A son whom thou shalt beget. Aram. *br dtwlyd*. The MT idiom, that could be literally translated "he who shall come out from your bowels," was felt inappropriate for a lay audience, not used to the Biblical Hebrew idiom. Besides sounding coarse, it was misleading, since one speaks usually of a son coming out of his mother's rather than his father's entrails.¹ But, just as it was the case with a child, instead of substituting another metaphor as, e.g. "from your loins," Onqelos gives the simplified expression "that you shall beget," i.e., the final meaning.

Your descendants. The Aram. *bnk* is singular, but can be understood collectively (Jastrow: "offspring"); it is, as a matter of fact, the consistent translation of *zera'* as the seed promised to Abraham in Gen 12:7, 13:15, 17:7 and 24:7. The same considerations apply as to a child above.

In the Memra. Here the circumlocution can hardly be explained as avoiding an anthropomorphism, since even the most demanding anti-anthropomorphist could not object to believing in the Lord Himself. Therefore, Aberbach and Grossfeld interpret that it is "to avoid a possible misconception that Abraham had not previously believed in

¹Cf. *Vg qui egredietur de utero tuo* and comments in Aberbach and Grossfeld, ad loc.

the Lord" that Memra is here inserted, "where no such objection would be appropriate."

Their suggestion cannot be lightly dismissed, but I prefer to account for this mention of the Memra in another way.¹ Since the opening revelation of God to Abraham at vs. 1 emphasized the "strength" or protection offered by the Memra, it amounted to an invitation to trust or rely ('mn) in It;² the present verse records the fact that Abraham did. The grasp of this connection with vs. 1 by the meturgeman, and the use of Memra there, made the same mention unavoidable here.

As merit. Aram lzkw. The Aramaic noun is in principle synonymous with š'dāqāh. Indeed, in the Onqelos version of Genesis, the root zkh translates all forms of the šdq group of Hebrew roots in all instances except one.³ The translation of Aberbach and Grossfeld, however, is fully justified by the predominant contemporary usage in Jewish

¹No temporal reference (e.g., "then Abram believed God") occurs in the text translated. Thus there was little chance for the misconception these authors see prevented here.

²In Aramaic, as in Hebrew, the root suggests, in Qal, "to be strong." The sense "believe" of the Hip./Hap. derives from the idea of considering something strong, i.e. trustworthy (Jastrow, Dictionary s.v. "'mn").

³The exception is šdqt' in Gen 18:19, as the object of the verb "to do" and in conjunction with dyn', "judgment" as a hendiadys. The STg also makes an exception in its usual rendering for this context.

Aramaic.¹

From a linguistic viewpoint, both Abram and the Lord can be either the recipient or the creditor of zkw. And the suffix on hšb cannot be taken as anticipating an object zkw, since this latter noun is in Onqelos preceded by the preposition l-,² translated by Etheridge "unto" in "unto justification."

The Exegesis of Gen
15:1-6 in Onqelos

Recent studies on the translational techniques of Onqelos include those of Doron³ and Klein.⁴ The results are clear-cut⁵ and show the predominance of midrashic

¹More on this below, under "theological ideas."

²Not a marker of the direct object here; with verbs as hšb which imply a double reference (i.e., one thing considered or accounted as another), the idea of equivalence is inescapable.

³Doron, Estudios Bíblicos 43: 173-87.

⁴Klein, Biblica 57: 515-37.

⁵Their conclusions can be systematized in the following categories:

a. In passages much exegeted by Rabbis: TgO often, but not always, subtly reflects such exegesis (see above on midrashic character). Apparent criteria for inclusion are the appeal by the Rabbis to the specific verse under consideration to derive a significant law or doctrine, the appeal by dissident sects to the verse for support, or the popular neglect of a halakhic rule that can be supported by the verse.

b. In anthropomorphic passages: TgO often substitutes a circumlocution for the anthropomorphism or the anthropopathy. Similar circumlocutions are utilized in honor of Israel or its leaders. However, no circumlocutions are employed for expressions that, though physical, are exalting and awe-inspiring.

techniques. These techniques can be subsumed under its popular character:

All the deviations from the language of the text were necessitated by the princip[al] objective in making the translation, namely to make the Torah intellig[i]ble to the masses of the people. Onkelos was therefore determined to leave them no loop-holes for misunderstanding the Torah.¹

As far as Gen 15:1-6 is concerned, Onqelos is indeed literal. The few existing deviations come under the categories of "comparative hermeneutics" and "circumlocutions."²

"Comparative hermeneutics" (i.e., harmonizations) appear in 15:1, bnw'h (cf. Gen 20:7, Num 24:4,16).³ The

c. In passages with reiterative vocabulary: TgO may sometimes substitute another word with related meaning for some of the occurrences, either for considerations of nuance, or for stylistic variation.

d. When words reappear in other contexts: TgO tends to harmonize all references to a given subject in the Scripture so as to make them to read alike ("comparative hermeneutics").

e. Extreme divergences: TgO may, in difficult passages, e.g. poetry, deliberately insert paraphrastic additions, or even a negative adverb that turns the meaning around ("converse translation"). However, in other cases the rendering was literal, but the Vorlage differed from our MT.

f. Extreme literalness: Some technical expressions that would take a long explanation in Aramaic or that were generally known by the people are merely transliterated, not translated.

¹S. D. Luzzato, Philoxenus (Ohev Ger) (Vienna: n.p., 1830), pp. 1-24, in P. Doron, EstBibl 43: 174.

²See footnote on translational techniques.

³In Num 24:4,16 (the only other occurrences of mhzh in the Pentateuch) the word is not translated "prophecy" in Onqelos, "presumably because nbw'h could not be associated with the heathen Balaam" (Aberbach and

word of the Lord being "with" Abram, rather than addressed directly "to" him, tends to protect the mystery of the Divine Presence and the transcendence of God (15:4, possibly also 15:1). The reverential character of the Memra circumlocution is well known.¹ In at least one case, however, the mention of the Memra also showed a fine understanding of the coherence of the text (see above on "in the Memra"). Metaphoric terms that were felt to be even slightly inappropriate in a literal translation, as "seed" or "bowels," were replaced by plain equivalents, thus protecting the honor of the descendants of Abraham.

As seen before, the translation *tqwp* probably involves a *Vorlage*, or traditional reading thereof, that differed slightly from the MT we know.² No change in the consonantal text needs to be posited, only in the vocalization (see also under Jubilees, *ad loc.*).

Thus, deviations from the MT for exegetical purposes are minimal in this passage and concern (1) the

Grossfeld, on vs. 1, n. 1). But if the *mhzh* is given by God to a mere "soothsayer" (Josh 13:22), *a fortiori* must characterize a true *nby* as was Abraham (Gen 20:7). However, the choice may also reflect doctrinal concerns (in view of the absence of visual content) or even divulgational efforts (through the explanation of technical revelatory terms).

¹See references for Memra under "Theological Ideas."

²It may also be reverential (avoiding the identification of God with a material object such as a "shield") but, as judged from previously studied documents, the explanation offered in the text seems more likely.

maximum possible clarity, "closing loopholes" to the understanding of the text by the masses, (2) propriety, avoiding all objectionable terms, and (3) coherence, relating a statement to its antecedent in the same context.

Theological ideas

Onqelos does not reveal any particular interest in the chronology of the vision, the reason for the fear of Abraham, the nature of his reward or the accreditation of righteousness. Some of these topics are amply discussed in other midrashic works. If, as scholars believe,¹ Onqelos was brought as close as possible to the MT text, the revisers did their work thoroughly in the passage under investigation. Some theological concepts, however, did leave their imprint in the translation. They are considered separately here.

Memra. The Onqelos substitution of "My Memra" for MT "I" (vs. 1) and "the Lord" (vs. 6) has been intensively studied in the past. However, according to Muñoz-León, many of these works fought the "phantom" of hypostatization in an apologetical fashion rather than studying the problem dispassionately.²

Against some of those studies,³ Muñoz-León's

¹See the beginning of this section, "The Document."

²Dios-Palabra, pp. 18-9, 78-96.

³In them Gen 15:1-6 is prime evidence that Memra does not mean "Word," since it is carefully distinguished

concluded that Memra and *ptgm'* stand to each other in the same relationship as Rede to Wort or Verbe to parole. Memra would designate the pronouncing word, the faculty or attribute of speech; *ptgm'* the pronounced word, the content of speech.¹ He has also shown that Ongeles uses Memra abundantly in covenantal passages.²

The statement in this document that the Memra was to be Abraham's *tgwp* points in the same direction. Divine "strength" and "protection" are inseparable from the Lord's powerful redeeming activity in OT terms (e.g. Exod 13:9).

Merit. The use of *zkw* to translate *ṣdqh* is not so much a deviation as a feature of the Jewish Aramaic for which the meturgeman himself is not responsible. The noun *ṣ'ḏāqāh* evolved rapidly, from the times when the LXX was translated, towards the specialized sense "almsgiving, benevolence."³

In a parallel development, *zkwt*, from the root *zky*

from the word (*ptgm'*) that came or "was with" Abraham. See Moore, as quoted in Muñoz, *Dios-Palabra*, pp. 644-5. In other studies, the TgO Memra "n'est pas présenté comme créateur . . . ni comme révélateur ni comme sauveur." Díez Macho, "Le Targum," pp. 51-52. Such role would, in contrast, be reserved to the Memra in the PTg.

¹Thus in the Jewish Targums of Gen 15:1,4, the meturgeman has understood MT *ḏbr YHWH* as "a concrete revelatory message" and reserved Memra for "'Word' as a substitute term for God." Ibid., pp. 644-5.

²*Dios-Palabra*, p. 616, n. 26.

³G. Schrenk, "dikaio syne," in *TDNT* 2: 196; F. Rosenthal, "Sedaka, Charity," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23 (1950-1): 411-30.

"be pure, clear," which is capable of expressing in Jewish Aramaic "be acquitted, be right," and secondarily "be found worthy, acquire," took over gradually the meanings formerly expressed by š*ḏāqāh.¹ The senses of zkwt quoted by Jastrow for the Rabbinic literature are (1) acquittal, defense plea, (2) doing good, (3) merit, and (4) privilege. The order he gives is logical and no doubt reproduces approximately the evolution of the lexical content.

The sense "merit" is predominant in the Rabbinic literature,² Later developments took it also in the direction of "charity."³ It is clear, however, that the meturgeman did not intend it in this latter sense.⁴

It is less clear at what point, in this fluid line of development, we should situate the sense of zkwt in Onqelos.⁵ We do not even know whether the term meant the

¹G. Schrenk, "dikaiosynê," p. 197; A. Negoita and H. Ringgren, "zākhāh" in TDOT 4: 62-4; Jastrow, Dictionary, s.v. "zky" and "zkwt"; Rosenthal, HUCA 23: 411-30.

²Marmorstein, Merits, pp. 6-9. However, E. P. Sanders nuances many of those instances as meaning something akin to "virtue," Paul and Palestinian Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), pp. 90 ff. This would fall between senses 2 and 3 of Jastrow.

³Marmorstein, Merits, p. 6; Rosenthal, HUCA 23: 411-30.

⁴See analysis above for TgO Gen 15:6.

⁵The uncertainty is especially acute in view of the possibility of a very early origin for this Targum. The understanding of the Pentateuch occurrences of š*ḏāqāh by the meturgeman may have been influenced by the later senses acquired by this term, or he may have grasped its original sense and expressed it through the earlier acceptations of

same for the original translator as for the later revisers who were responsible for the present form of this Targum.

The most we can do, in this respect, is to ask what conception of *zkwt* would a reader obtain, were he to derive it solely from Onqelos. Since *zkwt* is uniformly employed for highly moral, bilateral, and time-extensive relationships,¹ he would tend to conceive of its meaning in the "personal integrity" area.

In contrast, forensic and legal contexts (sense 1 in Jastrow) characterize, not *š'ḏāqāh* = *zkwt*, but *šedeq* = *qšwt* in this Targum.² This latter rendering is the one that has connotations of "straightness" as well as "truth" (Jastrow). Thus "justice" (a concept closer to "truth" and "straightness"--as in a fair judgment--than to "personal integrity") or "justification" would probably not be in his mind when reading *zkwt*,³ but "righteousness" and "virtue" could, and such would also be acceptable translations of Onqelos at Gen 15:6. Therefore we lack information for a

zkwt.

¹In the framework of divine covenants, not only with Abraham (as in the present context) but also with Israel (Deut 6:25; 33:21), and of ethical dealings in the commercial (Gen 30:33), social (Deut 24:13) and international (Deut 9:4-6) realms.

²Lev 19:15,36; Deut 1:16; 16:18,20; 25:15.

³As opposed to other traditional versions of Gen 15:6, as e.g., the Vulgate (*ad iustitiam*). We saw above, in the analysis of OTg Gen 15:6, Etheridge's rendering "justification."

precise analysis of the concept of *zkwt* ("merit") in this Targum.

Revelation and Protection. The only doctrinal interests still manifest in the remaining deviations from the MT concern the character of Abraham's vision and God's self-predication. This interest in revelation (*nbw'h*) and divine protection (*tqwp*)¹ breathes the same theological atmosphere of Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon and the Samaritan Targum. We have shown above coincidences with those sources in many details. This agrees well with the hypothesis that Onqelos is an adaptation of a very ancient Palestinian targum represented today by 4QTgLev.²

Summary

In sum, we have in Onqelos a sober translation, manifesting a reluctance to convey special theological concerns. It shields, as customary, divine transcendence from too intimate contacts with man's existence; but the very circumlocution employed (*Memra*) associates this with other covenants and occasions where the strength and protection of God was manifest in behalf of man. This is its contribution to an otherwise conservative exegetical tradition faithfully represented.

¹Interest in the concept must have existed, whether *tqwp* is a midrashic interpretation or a different preference for the reading of the text.

²Diez-Macho, "Tárgum," p. 868; Le Déaut, Introduction, pp. 81-2, 84 ff.

As most documents comprised in this study, it does not emphasize the idea of "faith." It does, however, clarify the content of Abraham's faith in the context by pointing to the revelatory Memra which opened the oracle promising divine protection. It may also have followed lexical developments of *š'ḡāqāh* in the direction of personal accomplishments (*zkwt*).

The Samaritan Targum

The Document

Very little is known about the history of the Samaritan Targum. According to a traditional source (Chronicle II), the Samaritan Targum is the work of Marqah (IV A.D.).¹ Scholars generally consider this information as valid for the J form, which agrees closely in vocabulary and style with the Memar Marqah ("Teaching of Marqah"). More study is needed to determine whether the other form, A, has the same or (as McDonald suggests) greater age.²

Le Déaut observes that the interest of the Samaritan Targum, far from being purely linguistic, includes the presence of haggadic traditions that can be compared to those transmitted by the PTg. He points to a

¹McDonald, Theology, pp. 41-2.

²Ibid. For the need of additional studies, see Le Déaut, review of A. Tal, The Samaritan Targum of the Pentateuch, Texts and Studies in the Hebrew Language and Related Subjects, edited by A. Dotan (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1980), in Biblica 63 (1982): 581-2.

score of passages in which this relationship is incontestable.¹ Thus, though obviously less rich in midrash, the Samaritan Targum should not be ignored in a study like this, and the fact of an independent transmission is certainly helpful to arrive at some conclusions.²

Though available to scholars for a long time,³ it is only recently that an acceptable critical edition has been available (A. Tal, 1980).⁴

Since I have not found printed translations of this text of the Samaritan Targum in English, I have attempted an English rendition of STg A as reproduced in Tal. STg A is slightly more interpretive than J, and therefore carries more information about typical Samaritan exegesis.

¹Review of Tal, pp. 581-2.

²Including dating, *ibid.*

³Since the Paris Polyglot (1645). See J. R. Diaz, "Targum Samaritano," in A. Diez Macho, ed., Enciclopedia de la Biblia (Barcelona: Garriga, 1963); *idem*, "Ediciones del Targum Samaritano" Estudios Bíblicos 15 (1956): 104-8, 18 (1959): 183-97; R. Le Déaut, review, Biblica 63: 579-82; and McDonald, Theology, p. 41.

⁴A. Tal, Targum Shomroni'al ha-Torah. Tel Aviv: University Press, 1980. It confronts in every page the divergent texts J, A, and annotates the variants for J.

Relevant passage

The present translation of the text of STg A Gen 15:1-6 has been facilitated by the latter's similarities to Onqelos and by specialized linguistic tools.¹

The deviations from Genesis (underlined below) are discussed next, but reference is made also to the more literal forms of J for the same points.

Aramaic textTranslation

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. btr mallyh 'lyn
b'dnywn hwh mlll YHWH
l'brm bnbw'h lmyr l'
tdhal 'brm 'nh tqwp lk
w'grk 'sgy šryr.</p> <p>2. w'mr 'brm rby YHWH
mh thb ly w'nh hlk
c'gym'y wbr mdr byty hw
dmšq 'ly^c zr.</p> <p>3. w'mr 'brm 'n ly l'
yhbt nwp wh' br byty
yyrt yty.</p> <p>4. wh' mll YHWH lh
lmyr lyt yrtnk dn hl'
'n dnpq mn hšk hw'
yyrtnk.</p> <p>5. w'pq yth lbrh ww'mr
hstkl šwy lšwmyh wmy
kwkbyh 'n tršy lmmny
ytwn w'mr lh hkh yhy
hlypnyk.</p> <p>6. whymn bYHWH whšbh lh
qšyth.</p> | <p>1. After these things, <u>in due season</u>, there was a word of Yahweh for Abram <u>in prophecy</u> in these terms: Be not afraid, Abram, I am your <u>protection</u>, and your reward <u>I will</u> exceedingly increase.</p> <p>2. And Abram said: Lord Yahweh, what will you give me, for I go <u>stooped</u> and the <u>leader</u> of my house is Damascus Eliezer.</p> <p>3. And Abram said: Lo, you didn't give me a <u>branch</u>, and lo, a son of my house will inherit me.</p> <p>4. And behold (there was) a word of Yahweh for him, in these terms: This will not inherit you, but he who comes forth from <u>your loins</u> will inherit you.</p> <p>5. And He caused him to go outside and said: Observe now the heavens, and count the stars, if you have the power to count them. And He told him: So will be your <u>successors</u>.</p> <p>6. And he trusted in Yahweh and (he) reckoned it to him as <u>truthfulness</u>.</p> |
|--|--|

¹As tools for the elucidation of peculiar Samaritan forms I have employed F. Rosenthal, "Glossary: Samaritan," in An Aramaic Handbook (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1967); L. H. Vilsker, Manuel d'Araméen Samaritain (Paris, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1981).

In due season. Aram. b^cdneywn. This could mean:

(1) At the appropriate time (with a calendrical specification).¹ According to the Asaṭir,² Abraham received a revelation (presumably that of Gen 13:14-8) in Nisan, and another (the vision of Gen 15:1-6) "in the fourth month."

(2) Some time afterwards, to dispel the impression that after these things establishes an immediate connection with the events at the close of the war with the kings.

The latter option seems more probable in view of the literal character of the Samaritan Targum.³ Other

¹We have also considered the possibility of relating b^cdneywn to 'dn in the sense of "rejuvenate, invigorate, renew" (Jastrow, Dictionary, s.v. 'dn), hence "in the [feast of the] renewal [of the covenant]," i.e., Shebuot (cf. Jub 6: 17-22; 14: 1). But I could find no instances of an 'dneywn = "renewal" in the Aramaic literature. In contrast, the cognate Syriac expression b^cdnhwn (J. Payne Smith, Dictionary, s.v. 'edan) = "in their season, in due season" coupled with the fact that Samaritan Aramaic has -ywn for other Aramaics' -hwn ending (Vilsker, Manuel, pp. 52-53), appears as the right explanation.

²Also called Chronicle I, of unknown date (Mc Donald, Theology, p. 44).

³Its reluctance in providing the reader with traditional information is abandoned mostly in the interest of the intelligibility of the context at hand. The difficulty that a reader may sense in the notion of God telling the victorious Abram "don't be afraid" could probably justify, in the eyes of the Samaritans, the interpretive insertion easier than the satisfaction of a chronological query.

translational possibilities seem less likely.¹ This insertion does not occur in the more literal MS J.

In prophecy. Aram. bnbw'h. "Vision" (MT mah^azeh) is apparently taken as a Hebrew *terminus technicus* of prophetic revelation. While hzh "is the usual word for 'see' in the various dialects of Aramaic,"² in the Hebrew Bible it is frequently "associated with nābhi'" but it does not occur in contexts with visual images.³ Thus, this deviation can be credited to linguistic adaptation. MS J gives, literally, hzb (= hzw in C, Jewish Aram. and Syriac hzw'), and other manuscripts and marginal readings contain adaptations of the Hebrew mah^azeh.

Your protection. Aram. tqwp lk. As in Jubilees, it probably expresses a different way to read mgn rather than a deliberate replacement of a metaphor by its referent. MS J renders literally mgn, while the related MS C gives also, in a marginal variant, the reading twrs (= Gr. thyreos, shield).⁴

¹A third option, to relate the term to the root ʿdn = "to enjoy," hence "when enjoying [the triumph]," is improbable. Not only we lack instances of the employment of such an hypothetical noun, as for "in the renewal," but also the insertion would compound, rather than alleviate, the difficulty for the reader.

²A. Jepsen, "chāzāh," in G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, eds., Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 4: 281-2.

³Ibid., pp. 282-3.

⁴Cf. Targumic Aramaic trys and the verb trs, "to lift a shield, fight" (G. Dalman, Aramäisch-neuhebräisches

And your reward. The conjunctive waw is encountered again (see above under Jubilees). The Aramaic 'gr is the expected translation of šākār (see above under 1QapGen).

I will...increase. Aram. 'sgy. It is not really a deviation from the Samaritan Hebrew text (which has 'rbh), but a well-known deviation of the latter from the Masoretic form.¹

I go stooped. Aram. 'qym'y. J has 'rṭl'y, "stripped," as 1QapGen. Heidenheim gave 'rym'y as the text of the Samaritan Targum, explaining the first form as a confusion between Samaritan quf (equivalent to Hebrew qop) and ryš (reš).² If so, the term would mean "heaped" (essentially the same as "stooped") but it could also be related to 'rm in the sense of "stripping." Hence, 'rṭl'y could be a later substitution of one Aramaic synonym for another.³ However, as explained when dealing with 1QapGen, 'rṭl'y can also derive directly from the Hebrew text.

The leader of my house. Aram. mabr byty.⁴ This may

Handwörterbuch zu Targum, Talmud und Midrasch [Göttingen: Pfeiffer], 1938, s.v. trs).

¹See apparatus in any of the two Bibliae Hebraicae.

²M. Heidenheim, Bibliotheca Samaritana (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1971), 1: 85.

³The root is highly polysemic. Jastrow identifies an 'rm II, "to peel off, strip."

⁴Cf. m^edabb^era' in Targumic Aramaic (Jastrow, Dictionary, s.v.).

derive from an equation of the Hebrew *mošêl* to *mešeq*,¹ which can be explained by the association of *mošêl* with *bayit* in Gen 24:2: "the chief servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had."

It may also derive from an attempt at translation of *mešeq* itself. As it is well known, *mešeq* is a hapax in the Old Testament and still unexplained.² J interprets *mešeq* as *mprns*, "manager, provider,"³ and, instead of "this is Damascus Eliezer," it renders "he belongs to Eliezer the manager/provider" (taking, apparently, the *d* in *dammešeq* in the Hebrew as equivalent to the Aramaic *dy*).⁴ These readings, both in A and J, may represent an interpretation of *mešeq* through the root *šqh*, "to provide water."⁵

A branch. Aram. *nwp*. This form of the Samaritan Targum, just as Onqelos, avoids the literal translation of

¹Attributed by Kittel's *Hebraica* apparatus to the Vorlage of Onqelos. Instead of a textual variant, however, it might have been a mere interpretation.

²See Koehler and Baumgartner, *Lexikon*, s.v. *mešeq*.

³See above on Onqelos.

⁴Thus, in J, Abram says: "I depart naked, and the son who manages my house belongs to Eliezer the manager." He would then be complaining, not that it is Eliezer who is inheriting him, but that the only important son born in his house belongs, in fact, to his manager. This is reminiscent of the Vg: "et filius procuratoris domus meae," though Jerome has seen bn *mšq* as a construct chain, while the Sam Targums take *mšq* as a noun in apposition or an adjectival participle. It is also reminiscent of the Greek version of Aquila (see next note).

⁵Cf. the Greek version of Aquila, *tou potizontos*.

zera^c as "seed." It differs, however, from Onqelos in substituting one metaphor (a shoot or branch) for another. But J feels that zr^c is quite appropriate.

The term selected by A, just like its original, is a singular that can be understood collectively. It translates zera^c here and at 13:15, but not at vs. 5 (see below), 12:7 (bnyk), 17:7 (bnyk), or 24:7 (zr^ck). Thus this Targum, when translating the term for Abraham's offspring at all (24:7 is a mere transcription), wavers between singulars (nwp, 13:15, 15:3)¹ and plurals (bbyn, hlypnyn).²

From your loins. Aram. mn ḥlšk. This is perhaps euphemistic and is certainly more usual in Biblical style, for mm^cyk (the consonants found in the Hebrew text and J). Again, the points at which the targum departs from MT are

¹Curiously, when Gal 3:16 argues that the "seed" promised to Abraham is Christ because the term for "seed" is singular, it does not quote the first occurrence of the promise (Gen 12:7), but either Gen 13:15 or 17:7 (the only places with the conjunction, represented in Greek by kai). Did Paul avoid quoting 12:7 because he knew some form of the Aramaic Bible with a plural instead of the singular required for his interpretation?

²This could be further explored from a messianic perspective. The metaphor of a branch to represent the offspring is not particularly remarkable in the context of Samaritan tradition. However, if it were found that Samaritans did not translate their Targum a novo, but based it on pre-existing Jewish translations, then the term "branch" could be important as the background of certain messianic understandings (see previous note) through its prophetic associations in Isa 4:2 and 11:1. This is all the more so when zr^c is associated with the Messiah in PTg Gen 3:15.

common to Onkelos and the Samaritan Targum, while the text for the alterations is not. This rendering is also found in the Pesh (mn ḥšk).¹

Your successors. Aram. ḥlypnyk,² in J zrk. A and J retain their respective tendencies as expressed in 15:3. Since the root ḥlp expresses in Aramaic, not only the idea "succeed, transfer,"³ but also "to drive young shoots, grow again,"⁴ ḥlypnyk can be taken, in fact, as a close synonym of nwp, but in plural.

He trusted. . . truthfulness. Aram. whymn byHWH whšbh lh qšyṯh.⁵ Though qšyṯh may mean "straightness" in Aramaic,⁶ in Samaritan tradition it is an important theological concept that stands in opposition to šqrh,

¹This rendering, however, is too isolated among ancient versions to be considered a reflection of a different Vorlage.

²A. Brüll, Das Samaritanische Targum zum Pentateuch (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1971), p. 15, gives ḥlypnyp. Etheridge, The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch (New York: Ktav, 1968 = 1862) p. 63 n. 9 writes: "Sam. Vers., chalipik, 'thy successors.'" No such variants ḥlypnyp, ḥlypyk are recorded in Tal's edition, however.

³As e.g. in the passive and reflexive conjugations, see Jastrow s.v. for the Niphal, Hithpael, and Nithpael, sense (3).

⁴Ibid., Hiphil; see also under ḥilep and ḥlypyn.

⁵The translation of STg A Gen 15:6 offered here assumes that the 3d person feminine suffix on ḥšb was intended to mean the same as in the Hebrew text. Otherwise one could understand it as anticipating the object: "and reckoned it, namely, truthfulness, to Him."

⁶Jastrow, Dictionary, s.v. "qšyṯh."

"falsehood."¹ Thus, it could refer to propositional truth or to personal integrity.

In the first case, since in the passage it is God who is making all important statements or rational propositions, this form of the Samaritan Targum might interpret Gen 15:6 as meaning that Abram attributed to Him truthfulness, rather than being credited by God with any quality. This would imply a bold reinterpretation of the passage, which would be remarkable, for such reinterpretation is absent from the other the Samaritan Targum (J) form.

Then again, it could refer to the "truth" (i.e., veracity, genuineness) of Abraham's act of believing. This seems to us more likely, since it would not comport a sharp divergence in Samaritan interpretation. But we cannot be sure, because Samaritan expositors do not dwell on this passage.²

The other form, J, has **zkw** here, "acquittal, good action, merit,"³ showing a more common understanding. The A form of the Samaritan Targum is the first document, to

¹See, e.g., Hymn of Marqah II.8: "Let the great prophet Moses come in peace, revealer of truth (qshtah) and destroyer of falsehood (shqrah)." J. McDonald, ed., Memar Marqah (Berlin, 1963) in S. J. Isser, The Dositheans (Leiden: Brill, 1976), p. 148, n. 77.

²Lowy, Principles, p. 170 n. 446.

³This is a summary of the senses given by Jastrow, Dictionary, s.v. "zkw."

our knowledge, that might consider Abram as the subject of *hšb* and God as the referent of *š'ḏāqāh* in Gen 15:6.¹

Exegesis of Gen 15:1-6
in the Samaritan Targum

As other midrashic productions,² STg A is concerned with making the text immediately intelligible to the reader and with preempting his possible questions. Thus, it adds specifications to the Genesis account, as e.g., when it directs the reader to think that the vision came to Abraham "in due season" after the victory, or when it notes that the vision was a prophetic one.

It includes euphemistic language, as when "entrails" are replaced by "loins." But it is not clear whether the substitution of "branch, successors" instead of "seed" obeys to the same or different principles, as e.g. the resolution of metaphors into prosaic language (again a popular feature).

Though popular in style, it also reflects tradi-

¹As for what justification the author of A could find for translating *šdqh* as *qšyṭh*, I can only offer the suggestion that in contexts as Gen 30:33 the translation "truthfulness" would also fit (though A translates it as *zkwt* in the latter passage). This way of arriving at the equivalent would confirm the likelihood that it is meant in the sense of "personal integrity." Since *qšt* is the preferred translation of *šdq* in this Targum, the option *qšyṭh* = *šdqh* suggested itself (see below under "theological ideas").

²Díez Macho, "Le Targum," p. 20.

tional learning. It boldly attempts the translation of obscure terms (*mešeq* is translated *mdbr*). The Samaritan Targum devotes special attention to a doctrinally controvertible passage, offering a unique translation for *š'dâqâh* in 15:6.

The fact that similar concerns appear in Jewish midrash poses the question of the relationship between the respective traditions. Lowy studies the problem at great length, and concludes that as a whole Samaritan tradition is remarkably independent, homogeneous, and stable through the centuries, though "social intercourse may also have occasionally introduced foreign exegetical elements from non-Samaritan sources."¹ The point must, therefore, remain moot, and surprising coincidences as, e.g., *nbw'h* for *maḥ^azeh* in 15:1, should be evaluated only after we know more about these possible influences.

Theological ideas

This targum stresses the prophetic character of the vision. This is interesting coming from a tradition with a rather short prophetic succession (ranging from the patriarchs to Moses and his contemporaries, and thence to the future Taheb only).²

¹Lowy, Principles, pp. 503-4.

²McDonald, Theology, pp. 204-11, concludes that the Samaritan concept of prophethood is almost completely

The opening self-predication of Yahweh is plainly translated. No special concerns are here detectable around the concept of "reward," in spite of a well-developed doctrine of rewards and punishments in Samaritanism.¹

We have seen that STg A, on one possible construction, tones down the importance of the believing attitude of Abraham. Rather than being the grounds on which righteousness is imputed to him, it would be merely the equivalent of assuming that God's words are true. No firm evidence for or against this way of reading STg A was found in the course of this research.

Whatever construction be given to the translation, it is clear that STg A had to depart from its usual distinction between $\text{š}^{\text{a}}\text{dāqāh} = \text{zkw(t)}$.² on one hand, and $\text{šedeq} = \text{qšṭ}$ on the other.³ Either the meturgeman could not make sense of zkw in that context, the way STg J does, or

concentrated in Moses. Were it not for Moses, "my voice would not have been heard, not as long as the world should last" says God in Memar Margah I.9 (ibid.). However, Margah recognizes in the same passage that God spoke to "former good men," but through an angel and not face to face.

¹McDonald, Theology, pp. 380-415; Lowy, Principles, pp. 171-3.

²Gen 30:33; Deut 6:25; 9:4,5,6; 24:13; 33:21. In Gen 18:19, under the influence of the hendiadys šdqh wmspt it justifiably renders gzh rh wdyn , "sentence and judgment."

³Lev 19: 15,36; Deut 1: 16; 16: 18,20; 25: 15; 23: 19. The exception, Deut 33: 21 (zkw), concerns sacrifices.

he was concerned with protecting the reader from conclusions that, in his theological viewpoint, could be misleading.

Though Samaritanism did not ignore the importance of faith,¹ it never elaborated much on the concept. Marqah mentions events from Gen 15:1-6 in passing,² but the implications of those ideas are taken for granted.

Summary

In conclusion, the theological atmosphere of the STg A for this passage is reminiscent of Jubilees and the Genesis Apocryphon, emphasizing much the same points³ and showing indifference towards "reward" or "faith." It sharply contrasts with the exegesis reflected in Josephus. The grammatical construction of Gen 15:6, however, is highly peculiar.

The Palestinian Targums

General considerations

The scholarly literature uniformly recognizes four forms of the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch: (1) Pseudo-Jonathan (formerly known as the Jerusalem Targum, or Targum Yerushalmi, to which the ordinal "I" was sometimes

¹Lowy, Principles, pp. 170 ff.

²Ibid., p. 170, n. 446.

³As, e.g., the time and character of the vision or the meaning of mgn.

added, siglum TJ I), (2) Fragmentary Targum, also known as Jerusalem or Yerushalmi II (TJ II), (3) the Cairo Genizah fragments (TC), and (4) Neophyti or Neofiti (N).¹

The origin of each form, and its documentary sources, need to be studied separately. However, since for this passage all forms exhibit very similar texts, they are considered here together for analysis, taking note of the differences between the various forms.²

The documents

The complex results of the study of the origin, history, manuscripts and editions of the Palestinian Targum can only be summarized here.

Pseudo-Jonathan is an old Palestinian form of the Targum with more recent modifications. It has numerous agreements with and divergences from Onkelos. The precise relationship between these two Targums is not yet completely clear, beyond the fact that Pseudo-Jonathan exhibits a mixture of Onkelos and Palestinian Targum

¹The information in this section was culled from Le Déaut, Introduction, pp. 101-2; Diez Macho, "Le Targum," 21 ff.; and E. G. Clarke et al., eds., Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch: Text and Concordance (Hoboken, N. J.: Ktav, 1984) pp. vii-xviii.

²This may not be true for the Palestinian Targum as a whole. M. Doubles, "Towards the Publication of the Extant Texts of the Palestinian Targums," Vetus Testamentum 15 (1965): 16-26, has argued that the right task is to prepare critical editions of each form of the Palestinian Targum as a whole. For this passage, however, the common interpretive tradition has produced a homogeneous text.

traditions.¹

The Fragmentary Targum is formed by bits and pieces of some 850 verses, copied one after another, including many exegetical expansions.² It was apparently destined to supplement Onqelos. Scholars disagree about the date for the basic text, but the present recension is from the end of antiquity or lower Middle Ages.

One Cairo Genizah fragment (HUC 1134) contains a text of the Palestinian Targum Gen 15:1-4.³ The fragment was copied sometime during the higher Middle Ages, but the recension therein contained may date from the first centuries of our era or even earlier.

Neofiti is the only manuscript of the entire Palestinian Targum for the Pentateuch without the late features of PsJ. There is much controversy about the date

¹See also the editions of M. Ginsburger, ed., Pseudo-Jonathan (Thargum Jonathan ben Uziel zum Pentateuch, Hildesheim & New York: G. Olms, 1971 =1903; D. Rieder, ed., Pseudo-Jonathan: Targum Jonathan ben Uziel on the Pentateuch copied from the London Ms. BM add. 27031, Jerusalem: Solomon's Press, 1972; Díez Macho, A. ed., Biblia Polyglotta Matritensia. Madrid: CSIC, 1980--(Gen. still in preparation); E. G. Clarke et al., eds., Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.

²Editions include M. Ginsburger, Das Fragmententhargum, Berlin, 1899; and M. L. Klein, The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980. The latter is a critical edition, utilized in this investigation.

³M. L. Klein, "A Genizah Fragment of Palestinian Targum to Genesis 15: 1-4," Hebrew Union College Annual 49 (1978): 73-85.

of its recension.¹

Whatever the date of the particular Palestinian Targum forms, the text of the tradition contained in this passage must be dated by means of a comparison with other ancient sources.²

Since all forms of the Palestinian Targum for the passage are similar to each other, they can be collated. The collation made by M. Klein for the Cairo Genizah MS 1134 (henceforward G) is here followed. This includes Neofiti, Neofiti glosses (henceforward M), and the FT forms Paris 110 (henceforward P), Nuremberg 1, Vatican 440 and Leipzig 1 (the latter three subsumed here under the abbreviation F). To this I have added Pseudo-Jonathan (henceforward J). Though the results show the superiority of the G form, other variant readings have also been taken

¹Both parties in this debate warn us that the mere fact of the occurrence of a given expression in some Palestinian Targum form is no guarantee of its antiquity. Both parties, too, recognize the antiquity of the Palestinian Targum exegetical traditions. Thus the disagreement really concerns the ratio of ancient to modern material in the extant forms of the Palestinian Targum. This is an important question, but since the present study concerns, not the bulk of the text, but only a short passage in it, little would be gained even if the matter were settled. Therefore, no attempt is done here to take sides in this controversy.

²Angerstorfer, Biblische Notizen 15: 73-4, points out that: "Datierungsvorschläge für die Texterweiterungen [as opposed to 'Übersetzungspassagen'] sind weiterhin nur über das Vergleichsmaterial (Qumran, Neues Testament, apokryphe Literatur, Mischnah, Kirchenväter, die beiden Talmudim und Qur'an) möglich."

into consideration.¹

Text and translation

The following translation is based on the text of G. It is reproduced in the left column below, divided according to the manuscript lines. When G is lacking, Neofiti (N) is followed. The renderings of Klein and McNamara are employed,² the most important variants noted, and the words underlined that relate to Genesis.³

Aramaic text	English translation
(1)	
a btr ptgmyy' h'ylyyn mn d'tknšw kl mlky 'r ^c	<u>After these things,</u> after all the kings of the earth had gathered together
b [l'sdr' sdry] qrb' 'm 'brm šdyqyy' wnplw qdmwhy	to arrange [the lines of the] ⁴ battle against Abram the just and had fallen before him,
c wqtl mnhwn 'rb ^c h mlkyn whzr tš ^c mšryyn ḥšb	and he had killed four kings and surrounded nine encampments, Abram thought

¹Gen 15:3-6, however, is not represented in the FT, and therefore for this section the documentary basis is limited to J, G (for v 4 only), and N (both main text and marginal glosses).

²M. McNamara translated the text for the editio princeps. His translation is followed as far as the readings of N coincide with G.

³Where the reading is peculiar to G, I enclose it in slashes: \ /. The most important readings with a divided attestation are given within square brackets.

⁴Alternative reading: "and arranged the battle."

d	'brm blybyh w'mr w'yy k ^c n 'ly dlm' dqblýt 'gr	in his heart and said: Woe is me now! Perhaps I have received the reward
e	mšwty b ^c lm' hdyn wlyt ly hwlq b ^c lm' d'ty 'w dlm'	of my commandment-keeping in this world and there is no part for me in the world to come; or perhaps
f	dy y'yzlwn 'hyhwn wqrybyhwn dqtylyy' h'ylyyn dnplw qdmy	the brothers or relatives of those killed, who fell before me, may go
g	\wytnwn/ bkrkyhwn wbmdynthwn wyštrpwn 'mhwn lygywnyn	and [relate it] ¹ in their fortresses and in their cities and many legions join with them
h	sgyn w'tyyn 'lyy 'w dlm' dhww' byydyn mšwnn qlyln	and they may come against me, or perhaps there were a few meritorious deeds in my hand
i	bzmn' qdmyy' dnplw qdmy w'tqyyymyn 'ly 'w dlm' l'	the first time they fell before me and they may prevail against me, or perhaps none
j	yštkh byydy bzmn'tnyyn' wythll by šm šmyy' bgyn	will be found in my hand the second time and the Name of the Heavens will be profaned in me.
k	kdyn hwwh ptgm dnbw mn qdm YY 'l 'brm šdyqy'	For this reason <u>there was a word of pro-</u> <u>phesy from before the Lord</u> <u>upon Abram the just,</u> <u>saying: Do not fear, Abram,</u> although many legions [be
l	lmymr l' tdhwl 'brm 'p 'l gb dmtknšyn 'lyk	gathered] ² and come against you my <u>Memra will be a</u> <u>shield</u> (trys) for you in
m	lgywnyn sgyn w'tyyn 'lk mymry trys lk b ^c lm' hdyn wmgm	

¹Most manuscripts: "and be in their fortresses."

²Alternative reading: "join to each other."

this world and a mgn¹

n ˈlyk \lˈlmˈ dˈty/ wˈp
 ˈl gb d[y] msryt
 bˈly dbb[y]k

upon you [for the next],²
for although I delivered up
your enemies

o byydyk b'lm' hdyn 'gr
'bdyk tbyy' mtqynyn lk

before you in this world,
the reward[s]³ of your good
 works are prepared for you

p 1^c 1m' d'ty.

for the world to come.

(2)

a w'mr 'brm bb^c w
brhmyn mn qdmk

And Abram said: I beseech
by the mercies that are
before you

b 'dny sgyn yhbt ly
wsgyn qdmk lmtn ly
[wm' hnnyyh ly]

O Lord, many things have
you given me, and many are
(still) before you to give
me, but what good are they
to me⁴

c w'nh npyq mn gw 'lm'
 \ryqn/ dl' bny
 w'ly^c zr br byty

since I am going from this
world [empty]² without sons
and Eliezer the son of my
house,

d d^cl ydwy ['t^cbd] ly
nsyn bdrmsq yryt yty
whnh

by whose hand wonders were
worked⁶ for me in Damascus
will be my heir. And behold

¹Usually understood as a synonym of **trys**, shield. In Gen. R. the same word in identical context is understood as "gift."

²Some manuscripts read: "every day"; one reads "every day for the world to come" and one "for this world."

³Most manuscripts read: "the reward of your good works prepared [plural] for before me."

⁴This reading is supported by some manuscripts belonging to different text types.

⁵This is the reading of only one manuscript.

⁶Another group of manuscripts reads "you have worked."

- (3) a w'mr 'brm h' ly l' yhbt bryn wh' br byty ytr yty and Abram said: Behold you did not give me sons, and behold a son of my house will be my heir.
- (4) a wh' ptgm dnbw mn qdm 'dny 'l 'brm šdyq' lmyr And behold a word of prophecy from before the Lord was upon Abram the just saying:
- b l' yyrt ytk dn 'rwm 'yl'hn dnpq mn m'cyk hw' yyrt This one will not be your heir, but only he who comes from your own bowels will be your heir.
- (5) a w'pq ytyh lbrh w'mr 'stkl k'n And he brought him outside and said: Look now at the
- b lšmy' wmny kwkby' 'n tykl lmmny ythwn heavens, and count the stars if you are able to count them.
- c w'mr lh kdyn yhwn [zr'yyt] bnk And he said to him: Thus shall be the descendants¹ of your son.
- (6) a whyymn ['brm] bšm mmr' dYY And Abram² believed in the name of the Memra of the Lord
- b w'thšbt lh lzkw and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.

Analysis of PTq Gen 15:1

As in former cases, due to the extension of the interpretive expansion for 15:1, a special section is

¹Omitted by one of the few surviving forms of the text.

²Omitted in one form of the textual tradition.

devoted to it.¹ In order to facilitate the grasp of the interpretive expansion, an outline of its structure is here offered. The divisions of the outline are determined by repeated references to the same Hebrew word of Gen 15:1 in the interpretive expansion.²

1. The import of after these things (a-c)
 - a) Translation of Gen 15: 1a (a)
 - b) The accomplishments of Gen 14 summarized (b-c)
2. Reasons for the fear of Abraham (d-j)
 - a) lest he already received his reward in this world (d-e)
 - b) lest the defeated enemies retaliate (f-h)
 - c) lest his merit had been exhausted in victory and a second confrontation brings disrepute to God (i-j)
3. The import of shield and reward (k-p)

¹The study of theological ideas in former documents has presented them whenever possible against the backdrop of a "wider background," going beyond the limits of the passage. In this case the wider background of the theological ideas of 15:1 is reserved for the discussion of the passage as a whole.

²Thus in section (1) the Hebrew 'hr is rendered first as btr and next with mn; in section (3) mgn lk is first trys 'lyk and next mgn 'lyk. Section (2) anticipates the mention of "fear" by providing a context in which fear is understandable. The anticipatory character of that section is indicated by the word which introduces the next: kdyn, "for this reason," and by the reappearance of the "legions" of line (g) in line (m). Instead of multiple renderings, in section (2) we have multiple reasons. Each separate reason for fear is introduced by the word dlm', "perhaps."

- a) Translation of 15:1b-c (k-l)
- b) The Memra, trys in this world
and mgn in the next (l-m)
- c) Protection in this world and
reward in the next (n-p).

After these things. Just as in Jubilees and the Samaritan Targum, this phrase is immediately elaborated with an insertion. But while the Samaritan Targum tries to disengage the oracle from Gen 14, the Palestinian Targum makes the connection explicit.

All the kings of the earth. Not a universal confrontation, but a reflection of Gen 14:3, which reads according to N "All these kings gathered together in the valley of the gardens, that is, the sea of salt."¹ The insertion in MPF "and all the governors of the provinces" (wkl šlṭny mdynt')² seems to compensate for the omission of the "fortresses and cities" (bkrkyhwn wbm̄dy nthwn) in line (g). The point of the latter statement was difficult to see in the corrupt textual state in which it was known to those recensions (see below under "may go and relate it"). The

¹According to later midrashim, the aim of "all the kings" was indeed to slay Abraham. See G. Friedlander, ed., Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer (New York: B. Blom, 1916) ch. 27, p. 193.

²Etheridge translates "and the sultans of the provinces."

word *mdynh* means both a district and its capital city.¹ Thus the redactor of the common trunk from which the MSS MPF branch out probably thought he was merely transposing a few words for the sake of clarity; in fact, he was creating a different text.

To arrange the lines of the battle (or "combat formations," Le Déaut).² The sentence is lacking in J, while N and F give the shorter form "to arrange battle." N, however, gives the longer phrase at 14:8, and the sequel, found in all the Palestinian Targum forms, "and had fallen before him" seems to require some previous mention of combat. Besides, on documentary evidence, it is difficult to explain an agreement of P and G except through the original Palestinian Targum.

Against Abram the just. The Palestinian Targum seems to assume that the captured armies of the "five kings" were forced to enter in combat next to those of the "four kings" with the attacking patriarch (see below on the "nine encampments"). "The just" is here, but not at 1 (k), omitted by N. Comments on the point are reserved for the discussion of 1 (k).

Killed four kings. So in N Gen 14:15,17 exaggerating

¹Thus already in Biblical Aramaic. See also Holladay, Concise Lexicon, s.v. "*mdynh*."

²Targum du Pentateuque, N Gen 14:8.

the Hebrew *nkh*,¹ and, consequently, the military prowess of Abraham.

Surrounded nine encampments. Usually translated "turned back" or "recovered nine encampments."² However, the nine encampments are obviously made up of the four foreign attacking (which he did not "bring back") plus the five local defeated armies (which he did). Thus, it seems preferable to see *h̄zr* as a Pe^cal: "herumgehen, umkreisen."³ According to Gen 14:15 Abraham "divided" his army, obviously for an encircling maneuver.⁴

Woe is me now!. The ominous implications of "receiving one's reward in this world" may not be immediately clear to all readers. Why is Abraham worried about experiencing enjoyable prosperity as a reward for his good works? All readers of the OT are acquainted with the deceptive nature of this-worldly prosperity, but what relation has this

¹"Strike, hit," but also secondarily "kill," Holladay Concise Lexicon s.v. "*nkh*."

²So McNamara, trans., in Diez-Macho, ed., Neophyti; Le Déaut, Targum du Pentateuque; M. L. Klein, HUCA 49: 79; all ad loc.

³So Dalman, Handwörterbuch; Jastrow similarly "go around." "Recover" is a derivative sense, mainly Aphel. In PTg Gen 14:16, *h̄zr* is probably to be understood as a factitive of the normal Pael sense ("go back"), i.e., "bring back."

⁴N does not give evidence in 14:15 of knowing the later tradition (J Gen 14:5 and Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer chap. 27, attributed to Samuel the Younger) according to which Abraham divided the night, reserving one part for the slaying of the firstborn at the exodus.

deception with the reward for good works? The answer lies in the conviction, widespread in ancient Judaism, that prosperity in this life may be God's reward to the wicked for good works they have to their credit. Thus what Abraham fears is the implication that he belongs to the wicked. For the relevant parallels, see below on the theological ideas for this verse.

But prosperity in this world can also derive from complete or perfect righteousness. The point of the oracle in PTg Gen 15:1 is precisely to report to Abraham that he is included in the latter category.¹

My commandment-keeping. Literally, "my commandments," but *mšwh* is used in Targumic Aramaic in the sense "religious act, meritorious deed."²

May go and relate it. The second reason for the fear of Abraham, the fear of retaliation, is very different in nature. The former is religious, this is purely natural. The first presents us a godly hero, the second a very human character. Thus they seem to have arisen independently.

Since Abraham is represented in the Palestinian Targum as having killed the foreign attackers, it is their relatives who must organize the feared retaliation. The first step is to raise sympathy for the killed and muster solidarity. No national awareness is presupposed here,

¹More on this later.

²Jastrow, Dictionary, s.v. "*mšwh*."

only blood vengeance. Thus we have in this reason either an artful recreation of the patriarchal atmosphere of the Genesis narrative or (more likely) a genuinely ancient explanation.

Instead of *wytnwn*, F and N have *wyhwn*: "and they be in their fortresses and in their cities." This obviously corrupt¹ text has resulted in a pointless sentence that is omitted by P and J. The superior character of the G witness (the only one with such a reading) and the common origin of the Palestinian Targum forms for the passage is thus substantiated.

A few meritorious deeds. The lack of harmony between the present and former reasons for the fear of Abraham was perceived by the redactor of the original form of the Palestinian Targum. Since God has granted Abraham such a great victory recently, why fear a second confrontation as the envisioned retaliation would provide?

To alleviate this problem, he inserts another quandary related to the first: the merits derived from his commandment-keeping, quite apart from his standing before God, were sufficient for the first victory, but perhaps not for a second one.

¹Note that *tn* and *hw* are both sequences formed by a broad, rectangular sign that is open below followed by a narrow, vertical straight sign; the traits that discriminate between tau and he, on the one hand, and nun and waw, on the other, are both short strokes at the same level in the line and thus open to accidental obliteration by the same factor.

This sequence of ideas was not perceived by the redactor of the recension preserved in N. He takes "or perhaps" as the beginning of a separate and independent possibility contemplated by Abraham. In consequence, seeing the previous sentence as incomplete, he supplies "and they will kill me." This unique N reading is clearly inferior.

Merits are here considered insufficient for a second victory because they were conceived of as a store that diminishes with each fortunate turn of events in life.¹ They should be "saved" or stored up,² as other passages show, both within and outside the Targums, early and later in our era.³

¹Marmorstein, Merits, p. 20 ff.

²Thus R. Jannai argues in bShabb. 32a that a man should never deliberately expose himself to dangers, because even "if a miracle is wrought for him, it is deducted from his merits." This is, the Soncino editorial footnote explains, because "the miracle is a reward for some of his merits, and so he has now less to his credit."

³Thus, according to J Exod 15:22, the Israelites, immediately after the astounding miracle at the Red Sea shores, "walked three days in the desert, empty of commandments, and did not find water." The Madrid Polyglotta, in a footnote, explains that the water is a symbol of the commandments of the Law and, therefore, where "there is no Law there is no water." This is the metaphorical explanation (*doreshe reshemoth*) found in bBaba Qamma' 82a, Mekhilta' de Rabbi Simeon, etc., but Etan Levine (Neofiti 3: 445) also calls the attention of the reader to yYom Tob 2, 61a, bShabb. 118b, etc., which would explain Marah events in terms of deficient commandment-keeping. The metaphorical explanation does not fit well the character of the Palestinian Targum. The expression "empty of commandments" is also found in both J and N at Deut 16:16 (using the noun *mswh*). The underlying idea of

Instead of "none will be found," M reads "no merit (zkw) will be found," N "no commandment (mswh) will be found," and J "no reward ('gr') will be found." All these insertions are equivalent to each other in context and superfluous. Being the longer reading, with the usual criteria to evaluate transcriptional probability, they should be disregarded.

The name of the Heavens will be profaned in me. This completes the reworking of the traditional material on the reasons for the fear of Abraham. That which the patriarch fears is not so much physical danger, but the discredit to the cause of Heaven that may result from his defeat. Thus reworked, the disagreement between the first and the second reasons for the fear of the patriarch is toned down, and his godliness accented.

P omits this bit, but since in the passage this manuscript exhibits a persistent tendency to shorter readings, his solitary witness for the omission is not very significant.

A word of prophecy. As in Onqelos, STg (q.v.).

Abram the just. Since the misgivings of Abram concerned his merits and standing before God, the oracle is seen as motivated by the need to allay those fears.

stored-up righteousness appears also in the Gospels (Matt 6:19,20) and in Pseudepigrapha (2 Bar 24:1). The accent of the Palestinian Targum on these ideas may be gauged by reading J Exod 10:23, JM Exod 12:11, JN Exod 13:18, J Exod 15:22,25,26, J Exod 17:1, etc.

Prosperity was believed to follow either a life that is "just in all respects" or incomplete wickedness. For the benefit of the reader, the epithet remarks the thrust of the oracle, as the Palestinian Targum understands it, in making of Abraham a complete just. The theological motivation of the epithet is shown by the fact that at no other place in the Abraham stories does the Palestinian Targum utilize it. However, J abstains even here, as above at line (b), from calling the patriarch by such a name. This answers to a late Rabbinical reluctance to admit complete righteousness in men who lived before Moses.¹

Although many legions be gathered. Before "many legions," M and P insert repetitively "the brothers or relatives of those killed come and." The witnesses are about equally divided in their attestation for one or the other synonym to express the gathering: *šrp* or *knš*. The first can probably be judged better, in spite of the support of G for the second, because of the agreement of two usually separated recensions, N and P.

The Palestinian Targum sees in the two parts of the self-predication of the Lord in Gen 15:1 the solution in turn to each of the fears of Abraham. They have been artfully presented in chiastic agreement: the shield

¹The fact that the older forms of the Palestinian Targum use this epithet for Noah, too, has been adduced in favor of their antiquity, precisely on account of this reluctance. See Le Déaut, Introduction, p. 176, n. 2.

answers to the fear of retaliation and the reward to the fear for his standing before the Lord.

My Memra. As in Onqelos (q.v.).

A shield for you in this world and a mgn upon you for the next. P alone interprets the Hebrew mgn here as a verbal form: ytklk, to be read as an Aphel: "will make you confident" = "will protect you." This follows the tqwp tradition seen so often in the previously studied midrashic works.

N has a corrupt trwm, and M prys,¹ instead of trys (F conflates prys trys). The Greek borrowing thyreos² seems to have been misunderstood by the medieval copyists.³ It refers to the greater shield that covers most of the warrior's body.⁴ It is the term selected by Aboth 4:11: "Repentance and good deeds are as a shield against punish-

¹The forms prys' and prs (the latter is the reading in Nuremberg) mean both "curtain" (Jastrow, Dictionary, under the respective entries).

²Thus the dictionaries of Dalman and of J. Levy (Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Targumim und einen grossen Theil des rabbinischen Schriftthums [Leipzig: Engel, 1867]); Jastrow relates it to the root 'rs, to bind, and explains that this kind of shield was made with twisted osiers.

³A similar corruption for trys (trym) appears in the Venice Rabbinical Bible (1536) for Tg Ps 3:4. On the analogy of tryswt (sandal-strappings) it was understood sometimes as a "shutter" and thus a synonym to pr(y)s (see above).

⁴Levy, Wörterbuch, s.v. "trys"; Jastrow quotes Rabbinical evidence of this fact. The Greeks had also peltê, gerron, aspis. Thyreos derives from thyra, door (Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, s.v. "thyreos").

ment [lit. "repayments (for misdeeds)"].¹ We thus encounter a vocalization of the Hebrew *Vorlage* such as now present in the MT. The paraphrastic Palestinian Targum has no qualms, apparently, in reading the name of an artifact as the self-description of the Lord.

The phrase "in this world," read by all witnesses except J,² is neatly balanced in G by "for the next" (l^clm' d'ty) in connection with the *mgn* that is also read by all witnesses except J.

Instead of "for the next," N repeats "in this world." That this is an accidental dittography is substantiated by the employment (in N alone) of *lk* ("for you") as the preposition that follows *mgn*, instead of ^clk as in all remaining witnesses: I assume that the copyist, or a succession of copyists, has first miscopied ^clk as *lk* and then, trying to find his place in his *Vorlage*, went back to the *lk* after *trys* and repeated the sequence *lk b^clm' hdyn* that follows it in most witnesses (homoeoarcton). The first *b^clm' hdyn* was later modified into *dhwh hwh* in this recension.

P or its ancestor had also difficulties with l^clm' d'ty. It substitutes *kl ywm'* ("every day") instead--an

¹Aram. *pwr^cn'* (see Jastrow, *Dictionary*), translated "Unglücksfällen" in J. Levy *Wörterbuch*, s.v. "*trys*." The "avenger" or "executor" is *pwr^cn*, therefore the "repayment" in question is always in *malam partem*.

²P shortens it to *b^clm'*, "in the world," which is equivalent.

obviously inferior reading. But one does not need to postulate an intentional deformation: the other forms of the FT, as usual, conflate *kl ywm' l'lm' d'ty*. Thus there is no ill-will against the mention of the next world in this context. It is not immediately clear, however, what "every day for the world to come" might mean.

Thus again a unique reading occurs in G both clearly superior in sense (i.e., greater compositional probability) and as the *lectio media* which may explain all other readings (greater transcriptional probability).

The place of "for the next world" now established in the text, one needs to tackle next the meaning of *mgn* in this Aramaic context. It may mean "a gift of grace," *magân*, but more likely "a shield," *mâgên*.¹ The use of *‘lk* (upon you) in connection with *mgn* is more natural if the latter is understood as a shield rather than a gift. The translators of the Palestinian Targum have also understood this word as "shield."²

The very fact that the Hebrew Vorlage has been read

¹True, after an interpretive expansion very similar to the present one, Gen. R. 44:4 employs *mgn* in the first sense. So in J. Neusner, Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis, a New American Translation (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985), p. 127-8. There, however, it is applied to "this world," while the "reward" is reserved for the next. In PTg Gen 15:1, in contrast, the *mgn* is explicitly connected with the next world.

²For N, "escudo" (Diez Macho), "bouclier" (Le Déaut), or "protection"--not "gift"--(Mc Namara); for FT, "shield" (Etheridge).

as if it was vocalized *māgên* and rendered *trys* suggests that the *mgn* here is a repeated translation of the same Hebrew term.¹

Though at first sight a shield in the next world seems superfluous, a parallel exemplifies such idea of protection against "punishments" or "repayments" (for misdeeds).² Here, then, God appears as the shield against eschatological punishments in his character of the Reserver of rewards. This is clear from the "this world/next world" scheme in the following lines that matches the "*trys* in this world and *mgn* in the next" here:

Although I delivered up your enemies before you in this world, the reward[s] of your good works are prepared for you before me for the world to come. Since the protection implicit in the delivery of enemies in the hand of Abraham corresponds to the "shield in this world," the reservation of the reward for the next world balances out the "shield in the next." The good works do not produce this protec-

¹For Targumic double renderings, see above on 1QapGen and Josephus.

²Aboth 4:11: "R. Eliezer b. Jacob said: He who performs one precept acquires for himself one advocate, and he who commits one transgression acquires for himself one accuser. Repentance and good deeds are as a shield against punishment." The classical interpretation, though strenuously objected by some modern Jewish theologians, as Moore, and such followers as E. P. Sanders, is represented in the editorial footnote: "If transgressions have outnumbered fulfilments of precepts, then divine punishment can be averted by Repentance (in the case of the person about to die) and by (that together with) good deeds (in the case of one who lives on)."

tive effect automatically as in some karma system, but because God takes them into consideration, gives them their proper weight, and keeps them in sight before Him "for the world to come."

The words "although I delivered up your enemies before you in this world" are omitted by MP. As seen above, there is no mention of the other world in the preceding sentence in these recensions. Thus the last idea mentioned before the reward of Abraham is the protection of God in this world, and these forms of the Palestinian Targum are then able to skip, as redundant, the mention of the victory of Gen 14 here, substituting a simple "but" (brm) instead. In MP, then, there is only one contrast between "this" and the "next" world, instead of the symmetrical pair of contrasts in G.

The reward[s] of your good works. The import of this concept has been already studied above. I simply stress here the fact that Abraham receives prosperity both in this world and in the next and that this places him in the "perfect just" (ṣaddiq) category.

Though all the forms of the Aramaic text have 'gr, "reward," in singular, almost all have the corresponding adjectival Ithp. participle, mtqnyn, "prepared," in plural. J and MP have perceived the grammatical difficulty. J gives mtqn. M and P insert a conjunction before ʿbd(y)k: "the reward and your good works are prepared." The first

reading must be retained not only because of the agreement of the remaining recensions but also because it is the *lectio difficilior*. It is not an absurd reading: we have there an agreement *ad sensu*. The reward at issue is a reward "of your good works," 'bdyk tby' (both words in plural). Each good work commands its reward,¹ therefore "the reward" and "the rewards" are in this case virtually equivalent. As seen before, the plural "the rewards of your good deeds" is also the tradition preserved in Josephus for this same interpretive expansion.²

The exegesis of Gen 15:1 in
the Palestinian Targum

Some exegetical concerns of the Palestinian Targum appear in works previously seen but different ones are also added. Where the Samaritan Targum takes pains to show that Gen 14 is unrelated to this context ("in its due time"), the Palestinian Targum takes the opposite road. Just as Josephus, it makes a direct connection with the victory, taking "after these things" as its textproof.

While it repeats the expansions related to a concern with revelation (as in "a word of prophecy"), the

¹See Aboth 4:11 above.

²The phrase "good works that were prepared by God" occurs also in the NT (*ergois agathois hois proëtoimasen ho theos*, Eph 2:10). There, however, the context differs: it is not a question of good works prepared to be rewarded in the next world (as in P) but of good works prepared in the providence of God to be executed in this life.

overriding concern was to explain the mention of "fear" in the oracle (that Josephus skipped entirely) in the context of a victory. As Vermes notes:

It must have disturbed the Rabbis to find God addressing words of encouragement to Abraham after his triumph, and ancient tradition clearly finds it necessary to interpret this verse at length. In Genesis Apocryphon the oracle itself is developed, but the Targums emphasize the doubts tormenting Abraham and present God's words as an answer to them. In both writings, the phrase 'Fear not' are [sic] set into a reasonable context.¹

As pointed out before, 1QapGen merely blends the victory into a general background of prosperity, while the Palestinian Targum makes it into the main referent of "after these things." Thus the problem of the fear after victory is more acute.

One obvious explanation is that he feared retaliation. The ancient exegetes availed themselves of it, but this raised additional questions that the Palestinian Targum is forced to take up. Was Abraham forgetting that it was God who gave him victory, and that He still lives? No, but it would be presumptuous to take providential deliverance for granted at every turn: his merits might have been exhausted in the former battle.

But this leads in turn to another explanation, one that would in itself be sufficient, perhaps, were the Palestinian Targum not so deeply committed to convey previous traditions. Maybe that which Abraham feared was

¹Scripture, p. 121.

"that his victory was his entire recompense for his life's devotion to the cause of God."¹ Or as Neusner puts it, "that he had used up in this world the merit he had attained."²

A support for this explanation is then found in the content of the oracle, with its assurance of reward. This is interpreted as the eschatological reward, and even the protection promised in the oracle is split between this world (to allay the fear of retaliation) and the next (to strengthen the assurance in regards to the future reward).

The connection, or lack thereof, between this chapter and the preceding one in Genesis is a difficulty that the text itself raises with the opening phrase "after these things" and, therefore, a legitimate concern of "pure exegesis" in the sense employed by Vermes. The mention of "fear" in the oracle may also be perplexing to the reader at any period. The elaborate discussion of reasons for the fear, however, is characteristically midrashic, in its "supplying of details."³

¹G. Friedlander, in a footnote on both the Palestinian Targum and the Midrashim, Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer (New York: Blom, 1916), p. 197, n. 5.

²Genesis Rabbah, p. 128, commenting on the parallel passage in that Midrash.

³Wright, "Haggadic Midrash," pp. 111 ff.

Theological ideas in
PTg Gen 15:1

The main idea to be elucidated, since it appears for the first time in this sequence of midrashic documents, is this-worldly prosperity as God's reward to the wicked for their good works. This explains how "receiving one's reward for good works in this life" may be perceived as a threat.

A problem arises in regards to which period may furnish parallels of greatest relevance. Since the controversy surrounding the date of the Palestinian Targum is still in an unresolved state, parallels originating at the different periods which have been proposed as dates for the Palestinian Targum are here used in turn.

These periods range from the first century of our era (Diez-Macho) to "several centuries later" (Fitzmyer).¹ Talmud passages (fifth to seventh centuries A.D.),² corresponding to the lower dating, are used first, and then earlier sources, corresponding to the higher date.

¹"The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament," New Testament Studies 20 (1974): 384. The balance of opinion is shifting towards this date.

²A. O. H. Okamoto, "Geonic Phrase in MS Targum Yerushalmi, Codex Neofiti I." Jewish Quarterly Review 66 (1976): 163.

Related conceptions in classical
rabbinic sources

R. Johanan quotes in Ber 7a a haggadah in the name of R. Jose. When Moses asked, among other things, to be taught God's "ways" (Exod 33:13) "it was granted to him." The ways in question were his dealings with men:

Moses said before him: Lord of the universe, why is it that some righteous men prosper and others are in adversity, some wicked men prosper and others are in adversity? He replied to him: Moses, the righteous man who prospers is the righteous man son of a righteous man; the righteous man who is in adversity is a righteous man the son of a wicked man.¹

R. Johanan, however, disagreed. Deut 24:16 forbids the punishment of sons on account of their fathers.

[You must] therefore [say that] the Lord said thus to Moses: A righteous man who prospers is a perfectly righteous man; the righteous man who is in adversity is not a perfectly righteous man. The wicked man who prospers is not a perfectly wicked man; the wicked man who is in adversity is a perfectly wicked man.²

Thus R. Johanan, as R. Meir later on,³ proposes a reformulation of the haggadah, but not its suppression.

¹This and all following translations of the Babylonian Talmudic text are taken from I. Epstein, ed., The Babylonian Talmud (London: Soncino, 1948).

²R. Huna (Ber 7b, Meg 6b) mirrors this concept. He warns that a wicked can "swallow up the one who is only 'more righteous than he,' [i.e., an imperfectly righteous man] but he cannot swallow up the perfectly righteous man."

³According to him, only two of the three requests of Moses, reported by R. Jose, were granted to Moses. The last, precisely to know God's "ways," was not. As a basis, R. Meir presents v. 19, which emphasizes mercy, even "though he may not deserve it." R. Jannai [Yannai], too, thought that "It is not in our power [to explain the reason] either of the security of the wicked or even of the afflictions of the righteous" (Aboth 4:15).

Indeed, there was a strong tradition in the sense that Exod 33 narrates such a query on the part of Moses. In Exod. R. 45 (on Exod 33) the tradition is related to another verse:

Another explanation of "And he said: Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory [Exod 33:18]." Moses desired strongly to learn what was the reward awaiting the righteous and why the wicked prosper. . . . What reply did God give Moses? "And He said: Thou canst not see my face (xxxii[i] 20)." The expression "my face" here means the prosperity of the wicked, as it is written, "And repayeth them that hate Him to their face (panav) to destroy them (Deut 7:10)."¹

Beliefs as those of Johanan explain the fear of Abraham in PTg Gen 15:1. Was he having prosperity as an incomplete wicked, or as a complete righteous? In the first case, "there is no part for me in the world to come" (15:1e). How so? According to Qidd. 40b

[T]o what are the wicked compared in this world? To a tree standing wholly in a place of uncleanness, but a branch thereof overhangs to a place of cleanness: when the bough is lopped off, it stands entirely in a place of uncleanness. Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, makes them prosper in this world, in order to destroy and consign them to the nethermost rung, for it is said, "There is a way which seemeth right unto man, but at the end thereof are the ways of death [Prov 14:12]."

¹Freedman and Simon, eds. Midrash Rabbah, pp. 523-4. At face value, the Talmudic discussion suggests that at one time there were those who, as R. Johanan, explained the prosperity of the wicked and the adversity of the righteous in terms of God giving recognition to minor aspects of the character of a person that are out of harmony with its overall quality. Others, however, held that God's dealings with men cannot be the subject of such a rigid analysis. There is an imponderable element of "mercy" or grace to be reckoned with. This opinion occurs already in Aboth 4:15 attributed to R. Jannai, identified in the Soncino editorial footnote as the father of R. Dosthai, a contemporary of R. Meir, hence a 2d century A.D. Tanna'.

But, do the Targumim fully agree with such idea?
This is the subject of the next subsection.

Related ideas in the Targum

An examination of Tg Deut 7:10 will show that, indeed, they did agree. All Jewish Targumim, including "literal" Onqelos, expand the MT in that verse, as these parallel columns may illustrate:

MT	TgO	N
wmšlm lšn'iw	wmšlm lsn'why	wmšlm lšn'wy
'l pnyw	tbwn d'nwn 'bdyn	'gr 'wbdhwn tbyyh
lh'bydw	qdmwhy bhyhwn	(b ^c lm' hdyn) ¹
	l'wbdyhwn	mn bgll lmtpr ^c h
		mnhwn l ^c lm' d'ty
l' y'hr	l' m'hr	wl' mšhy
	'wbd tb	'gr tb
lšn'w	lsn'why	lšn'wy
	tbwn d'ynwn 'bdyn	'd 'nwn yhybyn
'l pnyw	qdmwhy bhyhwn	b ^c lm' hdyn
yšlm-lw	mšlm lhwn	mšlm lhwn 'gr
		mšwn qlylyn
		dhwy bydyhwn
and who repays	and who repays	and who repays
those who hate him	those who hate him	those who hate him
	the good which	the reward of their
	they have done	good works
to their face	before Him in	{in this world} ¹
	their lives	in order
by destruction	to destroy them	to take revenge on
		them in the world
		to come
he won't be slow	being not slow	and does not delay

¹In the MS this appears immediately after lšnwy. The transposition clarifies the parallel and does not materially affect the sense of the whole. It is justified by identical parallel towards the lower end of the column, this time without transposition. Besides, FT places b^clm' hdyn precisely in the position here given.

towards	to do good to	the good reward to
those who hate him	those who hate him	those who hate him
	for the good they	while they're still
to their face	did before Him in	in this world
	their lives	
he will repay them	to repay them	he will repay them
		the reward for the
		small commandments
		that are in their
		hands. ¹

The text of FT is basically the same as the latter:

and who repays those who hate him the reward for the small commandments that are in their hands in this world in order to destroy them in the world to come; and does not delay to repay those who hate him the reward of the small commandments that are in their hands in this world.²

In any form, then, the Jewish Targumim interpret God's repayment to his enemies (in Deut 7:10) as a positive ("good") reward in this world, on account of some good they did, contrasting with an intended destruction in the world to come.³ We have already seen the same exegesis of this

¹The MT vocalization was omitted due to graphic space considerations. The translation follows the vocabulary, but not, for the sake of parallelism, the syntax of NIV; for Onqelos I follow Etheridge, and for Neofiti, McNamara.

²Migraoth Gedoloth (New York: Pardes, 1951), n.p. (at the end of 'thnn, under "Targum Yerushalmi" which comes immediately after the text of Deuteronomy). The translation here given follows the vocabulary employed by McNamara for N. Note that the main differences for the extant forms of the Palestinian Targum of this verse are merely that FT keeps closer to the Hebrew (and Onqelos) in "to destroy them," and that the expression "in this world" has been transposed twice in Neofiti, the last time further clarified as "while they are still in this world."

³Onqelos, with its literal stance, could not actually spell out "in the world to come." It does, however, suggest it by way of contrast by using twice the expression "in their lives" (i.e., in the present world)

passage in Exod. R. 45. It appears also in 'Erub. 22a.¹

According to a persistent Rabbinic exegesis, then, God's payment to his enemies is a recompense for their good works. It does not even consider the possibility of its being a punishment for their evil works, as modern exegetes understand.

The idea that God tolerates the prosperity of the wicked for the time being but will ultimately deal with them in judgment is very old, as the OT attests.² So is the idea that prosperity may also be a reward for the good works of the righteous. The new element contributed by this exegesis is that prosperity may actually be a reward proportioned to (mirabile dictu!) the good works of the wicked.

for the good done.

¹"And repayeth them that hate Him to His face. R. Joshua b. Levi remarked: Were it not for the written text one could not possibly have said it. Like a man who carries a burden on his face and wants to throw it off. He will not be slack to those that hate Him, but He will be slack to those who are just in all respects; and this is in line with that which R. Joshua b. Levi stated: What is the implication of what was written, Which I command thee this day to do them? "This day" you are "to do them," but you cannot postpone doing them for tomorrow; "this day" you are in a position "to do them" and tomorrow is reserved for receiving reward for doing them."

²E.g., Ps 73; Jer 12; cf. also the bold posing of the question in Job 21, Mal 3:15, Hab 1, 2.

Related ideas in
the gospels

Since the NT has been suggested for the comparative study of interpretive expansions in the Palestinian Targum like the present one,¹ one can now turn to the gospels for some comparative material.

A possible parallel to PTg Deut 7:10 may be found in Luke 16:25.² There are several points of contact, including the granting of "the good" in "one's life" (i.e. the present world, as opposed to the next).³

The parable (which is not told for the sake of describing the next life,⁴ and does not express a uniquely

¹Angerstorfer, Biblische Notizen 15: 53-4.

²In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the former is in Hades admonished to remember that he received the good in his life (apelabes ta agatha sou en tê zôê sou) and, therefore, must now accept punishment. Lazarus has similarly received in his life "the evil" (ta kaka), and now is "comforted" (parakaleitai) while the rich man is tormented (odynêsai).

³It is not clear whether "to receive the good" means "to be repayed for the good done," as in TgO Deut 7:10 (מִלֵּן תְּבוֹנָה), or if it means just "to enjoy good things." The first possibility is at least likely. Notice that the text does not say that Lazarus is in the afterlife "receiving the good," as one would expect if it meant merely enjoyment; instead, the otherworldly joys are referred to as "comfort."

⁴"It continues the lesson respecting the right employment of earthly possessions. . . . The rich man shows how disastrous are the consequences of omitting to make a wise use of such things." A. Plummer, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Luke, 5th ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1922), p. 390.

Christian view of the latter)¹ attests the currency of conceptions in which "to receive the good in one's life" may be in inverse relationship to the rewards in the next world. Not just the possibility, but the threat of this actually happening is spelled out in another Lucan passage, 6:24: "But woe [ouai]) to you who are rich, for you have already received² [apechete] your comfort [paraklêsin]."³ The denial of otherworldly joys,⁴ this time, is explicitly linked to the fact that they "already received" their share of joys in this life.⁵ Thus, in the same way as Abraham is represented as saying "Woe is me now! Perhaps I have received the rewards of my commandment-keeping in this world," in PTg Gen 15:1, Jesus pronounces a "woe" on the prosperous people because they "already received" in this life their "comfort."

An even more direct parallel occurs in Matt

¹For the Egyptian background, see Hugo Gressmann's 1918 monograph in G. A. Buttrick, ed., Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon, 1952), 7:288-9; for the Rabbinic, TDNT 3:824 ff.

²Though there is no separate word for "already" in the Greek text, the sense of *apechō* is that of having already received one's due in full. For its usage in contemporary papyri, see A. Deissmann, Bible Studies (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901). See also Phil 4:18 and commentators.

³The translation here is that of NIV.

⁴"Comfort," the same Greek root as in the previous passage.

⁵In contrast, the poor, hungry and persecuted will be rewarded "in the kingdom of God" (6:20-3).

6:2,5,16. Concerning the exhibitionistic discharge of religious duties (that could otherwise be highly commendable) as charity, prayer, and fasts, Jesus threatens the prosperous "hypocrites" by saying: "I tell you the truth, they have received [apechousin] their reward [misthos]¹ in full."² Here Jesus does not explicitly say that God is the One who rewards the hypocrites in this life; however, since God was firmly believed to be the future Rewarder of the joys from which the hypocrites are excluded, his audience would naturally tend to understand "their reward" as meaning also God's reward for them, though in this life. The fact that this expression is used as a short, lapidary threat testifies to the familiarity of the people with such conceptions.

Thus, though the sayings do not necessarily endorse

¹As seen above in Jubilees, this is the usual LXX equivalent for the Hebrew *šākār* and thus also the equivalent of Aramaic 'gr in PTg Gen 15:1.

²Translation from NIV. Older versions used a terminology (e.g., "They have their reward," KJV) that led many readers to assume that Jesus was here saying "the punishment is already marked for them" or something similar. Scholarship as a whole, however, never had doubts about the true sense: "They have their reward now, and can expect none in the future." See W. C. Allen, The Gospel According to St. Matthew, International Critical Commentary, 3d ed. (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1912), ad loc. See also the Interpreter's Bible and A. L. Williams, St. Matthew, Pulpit Commentary (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1913), both ad loc. The true explanation is already found in the Church Fathers. Cf. the Vg "recepunt [past tense] mercedem suam" and the commentary by Jerome himself: "Non Dei mercedem, sed suam; laudati sunt enim ab nominibus, quorum causa exercuere virtutes," In Matthaevi 1:33 in Migne.

those theological conceptions, they indicate the currency of opinions according to which the prosperity of the wicked is God's reward for them in this life as a counterpart to their exclusion from any joy in the next.

Conclusion on prosperity as
a reward to the wicked

From the above discussion this much is clear, no matter how one dates the Palestinian Targum and what other documents are accepted for relevant comparison: the reasons for the fear of Abraham in PTg Gen 15:1 are grounded on the belief that God rewards the (incomplete) wicked in this world for the "small"¹ or "lighter"² commandment-keeping (mšwn qlyln) so as to be free of them in the next.

The fact that the Palestinian Targums at this point "try to establish Abram's merit before God, so that he will have some basis for the declaration of uprightness in Gen 15.6"³ is corroborated by the repeated epithet "Abram the just" (šdyq', lines b and k). The idea of šdqh, as seen above in the study of Onqelos, is continuous with the concept of zkw found in 15:6. The standing of Abraham before God is thus the focus.

¹Thus translated by McNamara for Deut 7:10 (see above).

²This is the literal translation of qlyl (see Jastrow, Dictionary, s.v.).

³Fitzmyer, Genesis Apocryphon, p. 163.

Soteriological background

The soteriological ideas connected with these convictions are a particularly complex subject. Many of the alternatives of debate on the issue have been recounted by E. P. Sanders in his influential Paul and Palestinian Judaism.¹ Since this subject is incidental to this research, one cannot expect a full treatment here.

The disputed texts are Qidd. 1.10a, Aboth 3:15, and 4:22,² the earliest Rabbinic texts related to the issue of weighing good deeds over against transgressions. They should not be interpreted as implying an easy "51% plan," as if the Rabbis considered safe to disregard 49 percent of the commandments.³ On the contrary, they refer mostly to works of mercy which are done "beyond the call of duty," in a manner of speaking. The avoidance of the transgression of any commandment is presupposed.

On the other hand, the ideas expressed in those

¹Especially pp. 33-59.

²References here given in the form employed by Sanders in Palestinian Judaism.

³B. S. Easton traced the ideas of judgment "according to the preponderance of good or bad in human acts" back to R. Aqiba. See his Christ in the Gospels (London: Charles Scribner's, 1930), pp. 101-2. Easton thought that they implied a "51%" soteriological system and that therefore Aqiba's was an "easy-going" theory (ibid., p. 143).

statements should not be considered unsystematic.¹ To do so, Sanders is forced to reinterpret the statements in an unnatural way.² His contention that the ideas of salvation through covenant, also present in the literature, are incompatible with weighing deeds is logically incon-

¹Sanders, Palestinian Judaism, pp. 130 ff. Sanders opposes a text in which R. Meir speaks about the judgment being conducted by weighing miswot and transgressions to another statement of the same Rabbinical author in which he upholds a single commandment (charity) as saving from Gehinnom. Such opposition is plainly artificial. Multiple acts of charity are still separate "deeds" that belong in the kap zekut. Since multiple deeds can be the fulfillment of a single commandment, there is no reason why, in a strict system of weighing deeds, one kind of miswah alone could not counterbalance transgressions.

²He interprets the three classes of T. Sanh. 13:3 in terms radically different from Qidd. 40b and similar traditional texts. Where these texts make righteousness or wickedness to depend on the predominant character of the deeds of a person, Sanders would like to substitute the intentions and attitude of the individual towards the covenant. This reinterpretation is unsatisfactory. Why is the third, intermediate class called the "evenly balanced" one? In what are these people evenly balanced? In their ambivalence towards the covenant? Sanders does not say. His attempt, in a footnote, to project doubts on the appropriateness of the translation "evenly balanced" is far from convincing. All the evidence points in the direction of the interpretation found in pQidd. 1:10:

"[W] What you have said applies in this world, but as to the world to come, if the man has a larger measure of merits, he inherits the Garden of Eden, and if he has a larger measure of transgressions, he inherits Gehenna.

[X] If they are equally balanced [mḥšyyn, iit. 'halved']?

[Y] R. Yosé b. Haninah said, 'forgiving sin' (Mic. 7:18).

[Z] R. Abbahu said, 'It is written, "forgiving"' (Mic. 7:18).

[AA] What does the Holy One, blessed be he, do?

[BB] He snatches one of this bad deeds, so that his good deeds outweigh the balance."

sistent.¹ On the same basis one could prove that any other document, even 4 Ezra,² is equally covenant-minded and free from works-righteousness.³ Indeed, his reconstruction of the development of Rabbinic soteriology, which pushes down legalistic works-righteousness to the Amoraic period, or out to the periphery of Judaism,⁴ is highly problematic and

¹"The decisive evidence against the theory that 'weighing' constitutes Rabbinic soteriology, however, is the fact that the Rabbis held another view, a view which is totally pervasive in the literature and which excludes the possibility that 'weighing' was a Rabbinic doctrine" (Paul and Palestinian Judaism, p. 147).

²In Sanders' view 4 Ezra contains "the closest approach to legalistic works-righteousness which can be found in the Jewish literature of the period." Ibid., p. 418.

³Sanders' categorization of 4 Ezra "seems strange" to McGonigal ("Abraham Believed God," p. 162) since the "everlasting covenant" figures in the book, as well as references to God's love. In this conclusion, McGonigal merely imitates the procedure of Sanders: in spite of statements that emphasize righteous deeds, such cannot be the doctrine of 4 Ezra, because other statements that stress love, mercy and the covenant are simultaneously present. Thus the observations of McGonigal function as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the procedure of Sanders. If the acceptance of the covenant and atonement excludes the possibility that weighing deeds was a Rabbinic doctrine, then 4 Ezra is not work-righteousness-minded either.

⁴Sanders implies, in effect, that Jewish ideas of weighing deeds surrounded early Palestinian Judaism both in space and time but left it intact. Hellenistic Judaism, in spite of its well-known liberal attitude towards law-keeping, adopted those ideas, but stricter Palestinian Jews did not. The seemingly contrary evidence of ancient Rabbinic documents as, e.g., the Mishnah and Tosefta, must be reinterpreted away. The apparent testimony of Paul and other NT writers to the fact that those ideas were also part and parcel of early Palestinian Judaism must be dismissed, no matter what the exegetical cost. It was the Amoraim who, in spite of being the direct heirs of early Palestinian, not Hellenistic, Judaism, adopted those

enters in contradiction with Sanders'¹ own work on other documents (as the Testament of Abraham).² Serious methodological shortcomings in his work have been pointed out,³ a fact that does not detract from its importance. The present concern is to note that the soteriological ideas reflected in PTg Gen 15:1 are an integral and rational part of ancient Rabbinical theologies.

ideas and unwittingly created the impression that Paul's depiction of the beliefs of his former coreligionists was fair.

¹Sanders dates the Testament of Abraham (TAb) to 75-125 A.D. and recognizes that this document does teach weighing deeds, in Charlesworth, ed., Pseudepigrapha 1: 874 and 878 n. 52.

²The contemplation of all the kingdoms of the earth in TAb is related to the Danielic exegesis of the same vision in the Palestinian Targum, as is the preview of otherworldly retribution. See Mathias Delcor, Le Testament d'Abraham (Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 39 ff. The judgment according to the exact predominance of good or bad deeds is another point of contact, and the judicial capacity of Abel is unexplainable apart from the traditions preserved in this Targum. TAb does not only call Abraham by the epithet "the just" (as PTg Gen 15:1), but creates incidents to elaborate on God's recognition of his righteousness, e.g., TAb A 10:14. This means, by Sanders' own reckoning for TAb, that a composition similar to PTg Gen 15:1-6 may have existed before the end of the Second Temple community.

³See Neusner's review of Paul and Palestinian Judaism in Ancient Judaism: Debates and Disputes (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984). Sanders' monolithic view of Rabbinism "is ignorant" (p. 131) and too much indebted to the work of dogmatists (p. 136). In the works of these dogmatists "the Targumim are allowed no place at all because they are deemed 'late.' (The work of historians of traditions, e.g. Joseph Heinemann, and of comparative midrash, e.g. Renée Bloch and Geza Vermes, plays no role at all in this history!) But documents which came to redaction much later than the several Targumim (by any estimate of the date of the latter) make rich and constant contributions to the discussion" (p. 117).

Analysis of PTg Gen 15:2-6

I beseech. The concern of lines (2) a,b is reminiscent of the Philonian exegesis of the same passage. The concern is that Abraham's question, "What will you give me?" should not be taken as meaning that the patriarch had the temerity of talking back to God; he was certainly bold, but also respectful.¹ Similarly, in the Palestinian Targum Abraham does not merely request an answer from God; he implores it.

Just as in Philo, also, the question in Gen is taken to mean both "What else could you give me?" and "What, in fact, are you giving me?" This interpretation that proceeds simultaneously in two different directions for "what" is attained by first emphasizing the many things already received and to be received, and next pointing out that they are insufficient.

What good are they to me. Three widely divergent recensions (JPG) attest this bit of text, strongly arguing for its originality.

Empty. Though attested only by G, this word should be considered original both because the variants of this manuscript were found to be excellent at other points,² and because of superior sense. As seen in the lQapGen, both meanings of MT 'ryry are needed for tight argumentation.

¹This is explicit in the Philonian exegesis, q.v.

²Both on account of genealogical distribution (as the variant just mentioned above) and of transcriptional probability (as wytnwn).

Gifts could be either enjoyed or left to heirs; but Abraham is aged, cannot take the gifts along when departing this world, neither can he leave them to legitimate heirs, since he is childless, so the gifts are pointless. Thus the explication of the fact that one departs naked from this world makes for superior sense.

Wonders. . . in Damascus. Palestinian Targum, as the other Targumim, takes MT מִשָּׁק to mean Damascus.¹ The first mention of this city or region in the Bible comes in the previous chapter: Abraham pursued the fleeing armies of the four kings as far as the region of Damascus (Gen 14:15). The "wonders" seem an allusion to this victory, won against all odds.

Abraham's servants, headed by Eliezer, were instrumental in this miraculous victory; hence the wonders "were done by the hands of Eliezer." This exegetical tradition is attested elsewhere: R. bar Qappara even developed a gematrical "proof" for this interpretation: the numerical value of Eliezer equals 318, which is the number of servants mustered by Abraham (Gen 14:14).²

If such is the origin of the interpretation, then the Palestinian Targum seems to be exegeting a slightly modified text. Instead of the obscure "and the son (of?)

¹The name was etymologized in ancient times as a form of מִשָּׁק. See the lexical study in the next chapter.

²Gen. R. 44:9.

mšq of my house is Damascus Eliezer" of MT Sam LXX etc., it seems to presuppose a text like the one found in Syr: w'ly'zr drmwsgy' br byty hw yrt ly = "and Eliezer the Damascene, son of my house, he will inherit me." Eliezer, in this text form, is placed at the head of the sentence, the difficult mšq obviated, and "he will inherit me" added at the end (causing this verse to end as the next).¹ But the Palestinian Targum understands the relationship "Eliezer of Damascus," not as one of provenance, but of notoriety, as if it were "Eliezer, he of Damascus' fame." Consequently, this Targum, as opposed to the foregoing midrashic documents, proceeds to explain the phrase in terms of the events of Gen 14.

Word of prophecy (as in [1] k). There, however, the term "prophecy" had some support in the Hebrew (bamma.-h'zeh). Apparently this previous connection so linked the terms ptgm dnbw that they became in the mind of the meturgeman one set phrase.

From your own bowels--or rather, "belly." The Palestinian Targum has no qualms about the phrase, does not reduce the metaphor to plain language (as Onqelos) or replace it by "loins" (as Syr, STg). This suggests that this Targum has in mind an audience more Biblically cultivated than that of Onqelos.

¹As in some MSS of Philo, according to Skinner, ICC, ad loc.

The descendants of your son. We do not have enough witnesses to firmly establish the text of the Palestinian Targum at this point; J has the text of Onqelos. If N, the only other extant manuscript, can be trusted, the Palestinian Targum seems built on a knowledge of Onqelos (bnk), but "re-literalized" again, as "your belly" was in the preceding verse.

And Abram. This insertion, also found in LXX, Syr, Vg^{ms}, has the purpose of smoothing out the sudden change of grammatical subject. The context-based inference that Abram is the one doing the believing here is rather obvious.

In the name. This phrase is peculiar to the Palestinian Targum rendering of the passage, and may be influenced by Isa 50:10, with which Gen 15:6 shares the idea of trusting Yahweh:

Let him who walks in the dark,
who has no light,
trust in the name of the LORD
and rely on his God.

Whether originated in a "canonical interpretation" in view of passages as this,¹ or not, this deviation from Genesis reveals theological reflection on the subject of Abraham's faith (see below on theological ideas).

Of the Memra. Just as Onqelos, the Palestinian Targum

¹Cf. also Ps 27:1, which shares with Gen 15:1 the negation of fear and the conception of Yahweh as the strength of the believer.

firmly links vss. 1 and 6 through this circumlocution (see above on Onqelos). This link has been perceived in a previous dissertation on Gen 15:6.¹

It was reckoned. The main ancient OT forms are divided in their attestation of a passive or active form here. The consonants received in the Massoretic and Samaritan Hebrew texts do not allow, in context, a passive form.² These consonants are followed by the literal Targumim.

On the other hand, LXX, Vg, Syr, PTg, Jub, all read a passive or passive-reflexive form. This, however, seems either a secondary reading or an interpretive translation.

This conclusion follows from the observation that most witnesses with a passive form insert a preposition before "righteousness,"³ while almost all active forms lack this preposition.⁴ Without that preposition, the noun may easily be taken as the grammatical subject of the passive verb (the actual object of the action), and this would alter the sense of the whole (the act of believing as the actual object of the reckoning would disappear from the scene). Thus, if an original active form was deliberately changed into a passive one, the insertion of a preposition was necessary to keep the overall sense; on the other hand,

¹Sutherland, "Genesis 15:6," p. 24.

²Note object suffix -h.

³The exception is Jubilees, q.v.

⁴The exception is Onqelos.

if an original passive form was changed into an active one there was no reason to suppress the preposition. Thus the active form is more likely to be the original one.

The passive form has been explained sometimes as a reverential circumlocution.¹ The Judaism of late antiquity avoided referring directly to God's activities, such as "reckoning" here, that could smack of anthropomorphism. Sometimes an impersonal passive, as here, is substituted in verbs expressing the idea of judgment.² An evidence against such explanation is that Onqelos, which we have just seen is much more concerned about anthropomorphisms, does not utilize circumlocutions here.

A simpler explanation is readily available: almost all the sources that utilize the passive construction also insert "Abram" in this verse.³ Thus the same concern seems to be at work: avoiding sudden unannounced shifts in the *dramatis personae*. God is the actor in vs. 5, Abram (unannounced) in 6a, God again (at least in the understanding of these sources) in 6b. The introduction of "Abram" in 6a and a passive impersonal in 6b smooths the text out.

¹This has been claimed for the LXX reading by P. Davids, The Epistle of James (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 129. As an alternative, he suggests that more persons than God alone were considered to be involved in the reckoning activity (angels kept the records), and the reading reflects this tradition.

²McNamara, NT and PTg, pp. 138-42.

³With the exception of Jub.

But even if anti-anthropomorphic trends are not at work here, the use of impersonal constructions to refer to God elsewhere has no doubt facilitated the changes in the text.

As righteousness. See comments above for Onqelos.

Exegesis in PTq Gen 15:1-6
as a whole

Many strands of traditional exegesis are interwoven in the Palestinian Targum: (1) The connection with Gen 14 and the accent on the rewards for good works as in Josephus, (2) the double sense of "what will you give me?" as in Philo, (3) the double rendering of 'ryry as in lQapGen, (4) the employment of bnk in connection with "offspring" and of lzkw for MT sdqh as in Onqelos, (5) the passive impersonal construction in 15:6 as in Jub (also in LXX and many other OT sources), etc.

The few peculiarities of the Palestinian Targum ("the descendance of your son," "believed in the name of the Memra," etc.) result from a conscious or unconscious reproduction of phrases found elsewhere in the Bible or in other midrashic works.

Thus this work shows little independence in its exegetical approach to the Genesis text; its exegetical contribution, as said before, lies principally in its ability to convey and harmoniously conjugate a wealth of exegetical traditions.

Some of these exegetical insertions embroider upon a text that differs from the Hebrew and Onqelos but is also found in other ancient versions (as LXX, Syr, and Vg). This basic text appears to be an Aramaic work,¹ not created along with the embroidery,² but a pre-existing translation, which differed from Onqelos.

The present PTg does not include among the traditions conveyed in this passage the lifting of Abraham up to the heavens for the divinely suggested contemplation of the stars, attested in Philo, Gen. R., ApAb, etc.³ This, as in Philo, may be due to an unfavorable translation underlying the present exegesis,⁴ or to a perceived inappropriateness

¹It includes modifications designed to smooth out difficulties found in the Hebrew text, showing that it is secondary to the latter. Since the Hebrew text was obviously available to the Targum authors, one cannot conclude that the Palestinian Targum merely interprets the only OT text available in its time.

²A work that had resort to "embroidery" had no need to modify the "canvas"; those modifications were obviously created for a work that gave no other exegetical help to the reader (i.e. a translation of the sort of the LXX and Syr).

³The tradition may have been previously attested in forms of the Palestinian Targum other than JN, the only extant ones.

⁴We noticed that, though Philo knew this tradition, he refrained from using it when following verse by verse a translation that did not favor it. A similar explanation is viable here: the "canvas" translation undoubtedly had already 'stkl (so also STg TgO), Ithp. of skl, merely "to look at, reflect upon" and not, as the tradition understood nbt, "to look beneath." The embroiderer consequently may have preferred to skip the tradition rather than attempt a difficult connection.

of such tradition for the public Targumic exposition (mḥag. 2:1). In any case, ApAb 20:2,3 places the incident in relationship to the vision of the Gehenna (cf. ApAb 15) that Abraham saw while among the pieces (ApAb 15:1), and which PTg Gen 15:17 does report.

Both the peculiarities noted above and the selection of exegetical traditions emphasize a "canonical interpretation" with a marked preference for the immediate context (Gen 14), as the traditions about the reasons for the fear of Abraham and the relationship of Eliezer to Damascus make clear. In spite of the freedom with which exegetical traditions are inserted, few euphemistic circumlocutions are employed. This argues that an audience more used to the Biblical idiom is intended.

Theological ideas in PTg Gen
15:1-6 as a whole

Since the theological ideas of PTg Gen 15:1 discussed above were found to have currency as an ancient doctrine in Judaism, one should now relate them to soteriological nomism in the Palestinian Targum as a whole.¹

¹Unless stated otherwise, all Biblical references here apply to exegetical insertions found in the indicated verse or verses in Neofiti, and citations are, as above in this chapter, from the translation of McNamara. Whenever possible, however, I have employed M. L. Klein, Genizah Manuscripts of the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1986).

Soteriological nomism against a wider
Palestinian Targum backdrop

The Law preceded the creation of the world itself,¹ and the very purpose of man's existence is to "do service according to the Law ('wryt') and keep its commandments" (ad Gen 2:15). It was given to Israel as a result of the people's perseverant disposition to fulfill it,² an observance with far reaching effects.³ It is rewarded in both worlds (ad Gen 15:1): even in this world, it guarantees economic prosperity.⁴ In a less tangible but more important realm, law-keeping equals zkw (ad Deut 6:25). As such, it gives access to eternal life (ad Gen 3:22).⁵

¹By 2000 years, to be precise (ad Gen 3:24). This statement is also found in the acrostic to Deut 34, Şade, in Klein, G PTq, p. 362; cf. Gen. R. on Gen 1:1.

²This contrasted with the evasiveness of neighboring nations (ad Deut 33:2).

³The obedience of Abraham determined that his seed was elected (ad Gen 18:18, 26:4). However, already in the garden of Eden God had foreseen the rise of this observant nation (ad Gen 3:22), and revealed that its law-keeping was to "smite the snake's head," a smiting which would reach consummation in the age of king Messiah (ad Gen 3:15).

⁴"Moses the prophet said: If Israel studies the Law and keeps the commandments, from one bunch of grapes they will drink a kor of wine" (ad Deut 32:14). Consequently, poverty would be unknown among them (ad Deut 15:11). Geopolitic preponderance also depends on this observance: "When the sons of Jacob study the Law and observe the commandments they will place the yoke of their burden upon [Edom's] neck" (ad Gen 27:40). This translates into military victories (ad Deut 32:30, 33:29). What is more, it deserves God's guidance at every step (ad Num 23:9).

⁵Before the world was made, "He established the garden of Eden for the just and Gehenna for the wicked. He established the garden of Eden for the just who will eat

The observance of even a few commandments is linked to salvific effects;¹ "for a small precept which a man does he receives for it a great reward" (ad Num 12:16).²

In contrast, the reward of "small commandments" performed by wicked people is repayed in this world only (ad Deut 7:10, commented above). The ambiguity of prosperity and affliction in this world, which may equally come on wicked and righteous alike, has caused many to doubt the

and nourish themselves from the fruits of the tree of life, because (c1 dy) they observed the commandments of the Law and fulfilled its precepts. He established Gehenna for the wicked . . . to be avenged of them in the world to come because (c1 dy) they did not observe the precepts of the Law in this world; for the Law is the tree of life for all who study it and anyone who observes its precepts lives and endures as the tree of life. . ." (ad Gen 3:24). The idea of the Law as delivering from Gehenna is emphasized again at Gen 15:17: "And behold, the sun set and there was darkness, and behold Abram looked while seats were being arranged and thrones erected. And behold, Gehenna which is like a furnace, like an oven surrounded by sparks of fire, by flames of fire, into the midst of which the wicked fell because (c1 d-) the wicked rebelled against the Law in their life in this world. But the just, because (c1 d-) they observed it, will be delivered from affliction. All this was shown to Abram when he passed between these pieces."

¹Before the giving of the Law at Sinai, "it is because of the precept of the unleavened bread that the Lord did for us the victories of our battles when we came redeemed from Egypt" (ad Exod 13:8). And because of the observance of the injunction against intermixture with foreign women, Joseph avoided Gehenna (ad Gen 39:10), and the nation could hope for atonement in the Great Judgment (ad Num 31:50).

²The prohibition of taking the bird with the nest, if observed, causes to "go well" with one in this world and the lengthening of days identified with eternal life in the world to come (ad Deut 22:7).

doctrine of rewards.¹ The righteous, however, are assured by divine revelation that the reward for their good works is kept for the world to come (ad Gen 15:1). This revelation may contain aspects that God prefers to keep hidden.² Prophetic revelation also assures the nation that the reward for its obedience is prepared for the world to come (ad Num 23:23).

Evil works have their proper punishment. The "four dreadful judgments of the Lord" (sword, pestilence, famine, and wild beasts, MT Ezek 14:21) are related at Deut 5:17ff to their respectively appropriate commandments in the

¹This archetypical argument is put in the lips of Cain and Abel at Gen 4:8. In this case we have access to a Cairo Genizah text. See Klein, G PTg, p. 6; cf. Bruce Chilton, "A Comparative Study of Synoptic Development: The Dispute between Cain and Abel in the Palestinian Targums and the Beelzebul Controversy in the Gospels," Journal of Biblical Literature 101 (1982): 553-62.

"Cain spoke up and said to Abel: I have observed that the world was created with partiality ["mercies," *rhymyn*] and it is conducted with partiality; for what reason was your offering received from you with favor, and mine was not received with favor? Abel, then, began and said to Cain: how can it be that the world was created with partiality and is conducted with partiality? Rather, it is conducted according to the fruits of good deeds. Because my deeds were better than yours my offering was received from me with favor and yours was not received with favor."

Thus, mercy (understood as favoritism) is held in theological tension with justice and the reward ("fruit") of good works. That this tradition goes back at least to the first century is attested by its echo in 1 John 3:12. The role of mercy is seen, among other places, in the provision of atonement for Israel so that it can escape the day of wrath (ad Deut 32:43).

²Jacob saw this reward but was not able to communicate it to his children (ad Gen 49:1). Klein, G PTg, p. 163.

second table of the Decalogue. But those are just the earthly judgments. The complete retribution is sealed for Gehenna, at the very time "when the feet of the just waver" (ad Deut 32:30ff, with an allusion to MT Ps 73:2, which concerns the "prosperity of the wicked").¹

Repentance and amends, however, are provided so that God acts as if He did not know those evil works (ad Gen 18:21). Or as God admonishes Cain,

Why, if you improve your deeds in this world, it will be pardoned and remitted for you in the world to come, but if you do not improve your deeds in this world, your sin will be preserved for the Day of Judgment.²

Reuben was deprived from the fruit of good works by his passions, but is assured in his blessing that refraining from sin in the future will produce remission of his transgression (ad Gen 49:4).³ Hence the blessedness of him who reveals (confesses) his evil works (ad Gen 38:25).

¹In Klein, G PTg, p. 357, however, it is the "sole of the feet of the wicked slip."

²Ibid., p. 6.

³"You have sinned but return to sin no more, my son, and what you sinned will be forgiven and remitted to you." In Klein, G PTg, p. 164, an almost identical text is translated "and the sin that you committed you will not commit again; and that which you sinned will be forgiven you." The only substantial difference concerns the interpretation of lw twsip as an apodictic command (McNamara) or as a future (Klein). Though both are consistent with grammar, the idea that Reuben is here assured by his father that, as a matter of fact, he will not return to sin, seems to us less likely than a fatherly advice to abstain from such a sin in the future.

Good works are a basic requirement,¹ and have their earthly recompense also.² The retribution may be spread over many generations. Atonement is effected on Yom Kippur by animals symbolizing the *zkwt* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; this merit is what makes atonement attainable even when animal sacrifices are no longer possible (ad Lev 22:27).³ Their merits, and that of their wives, won divine guidance and continuing prosperity for Israel (ad Num 23:9, Deut 33:15).⁴ Beyond the three patriarchs, the beneficent influence of the merits of the godly, both on their

¹Abraham was commanded to be "perfect in good work" (ad Gen 17:1) and not only had he attained that status: Jacob (ad Gen 25:27) and his sons (ad Gen 34:21, 49:21) had also. Joseph "prospered in good work" (ad Gen 39:2). Sephora was a "Cushite," not because of the distinctness of her skin color, but of her good works (ad Num 12:1).

²Because of them Jacob could obtain the glorious garments that God made for Adam and had passed from one godly generation to another (ad Gen 48:22, cf. 3:21), among other gifts. These garments (*lbwš* *syn d'wqr*) have priestly associations: the *lbwšy dqdš*--sacred garments--of Exod 28:4 include elements said to be *l'yqr* [for glory] in vs. 40.

³With slight variants in Klein, *G PTq*, p. 309.

⁴It is in Abraham's merit (or justice) that all families of the earth are blessed (ad Gen 12:3, 18:18; 26:4, 28:14) and Israel is saved from the plottings of the heathen (ad Gen 15:11). Jacob's *zkwt* won not only the precious garment of Adam (ad Gen 48:22, mentioned above) and the city of Shechem for himself but also the order of blessings (ad Lev 22:27) and God's future benevolence on Israel. His obedient pilgrimage in tents particularly was to be rewarded with the tent of meeting among the Israelites (ad Num 24:15).

contemporaries and on their offspring, continues.¹ A few more references to the soteriological value of Law-keeping could probably be found,² but those included here cover the main lines along which the doctrine is recorded in the Palestinian Targum.

In any case, the material gathered here is enough to gauge the pervasiveness and importance of this complex of ideas in the theology of the Palestinian exegete. Indeed, these references cover a very substantial part of the exegetical expansions in the Palestinian Targum.³ No wonder that this exegete projects similar concerns onto the mind of the patriarch, and assumes that God was speaking about the same doctrines, in the course of the exegesis of the oracle of Gen 15:1.

After all, though God had spoken to man before in MT Genesis (e.g., to bless man, 1:28ff, 9:1ff; take man to task, 3:9ff, 4:9ff; announce a calamity, 6:13; reveal his grace and promises, 9:8ff, 12:1ff, 13:14ff), this is the

¹By the merit of Ephraim and Manasseh Israel was to be blessed (ad Gen 48:20). The merit (or justice) of Moses obtained the clouds of glory for his people, and that of Miriam won the miraculous well in the desert (ad Num 21:1).

²This description was made on the basis of a reading in *extenso* of Neofiti, without the benefit of a concordance.

³In Genesis they cover the bulk of insertions of one line or more in extension, according to the Aramaic text of the *editio princeps*.

first self-predication of the Lord; indeed, it is the first theological revelation.¹ In this revelation God speaks about his protection and his reward; therefore, the revealed theology impinged on soteriology.

Given the importance of soteriological nomism for the exegete, he could hardly see anything else as more urgent to be communicated to man and, therefore, needed in this opening theological revelation. This accounts for the extension of his interpretive insertion at Gen 15:1.

Other theological ideas

Many other theological ideas either were taken over from previous sources, and so are already covered by this analysis, or else have comparatively less importance. We may except the following:

The peculiar "offspring of your son" in vs. 5 reveals a concern with the covenant. Whether deliberate or unconscious, this deviation from the Genesis text reflects the Biblical emphasis, not on the descendants of Abraham generally, but specifically on those who are also descendants of Isaac (Abraham's son par excellence) and Jacob, the lineage of the covenant.

Another peculiarity, "believed in the name" at vs.

¹In the sense of theology proper: a discourse about God.

6, is also significant. The verb 'mn is used both to express a mere opinion or conviction (e.g., Job 15:22, Ps 116:10, 27:13), or the acceptance of a proof or statement (Exod 4:8), on one hand, and reliance upon a person, especially upon God, on the other (e.g., Deut 9:23, Exod 4:31). Though in this passage the grammar makes the meaning unambiguous (prep. b^e),¹ the Palestinian Targum chooses to reinforce the aspect of implicit trust in the person ("name") of God.

Thus, for the Palestinian Targum, it is not the case merely that Abraham heard the promises about an heir (15:4,5) and believed them. No such interpretation seems entirely consistent with the expression "believed in the name." The promises are not, of course, excluded from belief, since confidence "in the name" of the Lord is incompatible with disbelief in his promises. But the expression implies, apparently, that they are not the focus of trust. Rather, for the Palestinian Targum exegete, Gen 15:6 means that the patriarch accepted the invitation of 15:1 to implicitly confide in the personal qualities of the God who revealed Himself as his protection and salvation.

¹Koehler and Baumgartner, Lexikon 1:62, see under Hiph. Though faith can be expressed with this preposition, with l^e, or with none, mere conviction of the truthfulness of a proposition cannot be expressed with b^e.

This insertion, therefore, links 15:6 with 15:1 just as clearly as the Memra inclusio does in all Jewish Targumim (see above on Onqelos), including the present Palestinian Targum.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the trend towards the conception of a deserved reward for nomistic good works in this document reached full blossom. In an attempt to explain the mention of "fear" referent to Abraham in terms of the events immediately preceding in the text, and in connection with the "reward" that immediately follows, the Palestinian Targum introduced the soteriological perspective prevalent in its times.

The exegesis implicit in this document, however, also includes elements from previous works, as, e.g., the linkage of 15:6 with 15:1. The recognition of this relationship accentuates the importance of God's promises of protection and salvation as the real content of Abraham's faith.

The Rabbinical Midrashim: Genesis Rabbah

Scope of Literature

According to J. Bowker,¹ the Rabbinical Midrashim can be classified in the following categories: (1) Tan-naitic Midrashim: Mekilta on Exodus, Sifra on Leviticus,

¹Tg and Rabb Lit, pp. 69-91.

Sifre on Numbers and on Deuteronomy; (2) Homiletic Midrashim: Pesiqta de R. Kahana and Pesiqta Rabbati, on the lessons for Sabbaths and Festal days, and Tanḥuma on the whole Pentateuch; (3) the Midrash Rabbah, on the Pentateuch and the Megilloth; (4) Narrative Midrashim: Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, Sefer haYashar, Chronicle of Moses, Chronicle of Jerahmeel, etc.¹

The oldest, as their name implies, are the Tannaitic Midrashim, but since they comment on the books of the Pentateuch other than Genesis, they do not contain a sustained exegesis of this unit.

The oldest of the non-Tannaitic Midrashim is Genesis Rabbah, a work which has been included in and heads the later compilation known as Midrash Rabbah. According to J. Neusner, it is "commonly held" to date from c. 350-400.² The Judaica dates it c. 400,³ and Bowker in the fifth century also.⁴ It thus straddles the time limit here adopted, while the rest of the Midrashim definitely exceed

¹There are other systems of classification, not so clear and comprehensive as this one. Thus the Encyclopaedia Judaica does not mention the Tannaitic Midrashim in its article "Midrash," but defines both Mekhiltas (of R. Ishmael and of R. Simeon ben Yoḥai) as being halakhic Midrashim of the Tannaitic period; the Jewish Encyclopedia calls the Mekhilta of R. Ishmael, Sifra and both Sifrei "halakic-haggadic", but also recognizes their Tannaitic character (s.v. "Midrash Haggadah"), etc.

²Comparative Midrash, p. 173.

³s.v. "Midrash," col. 1511-2.

⁴Tg and Rabb Lit, p. 79.

this limit.¹ It is included here only to be on the safe side for completeness.

Genesis Rabbah

The document

Gen. R. is, in the main, a Palestinian work, as shown by the predominantly Palestinian provenance of its authorities.² It attempts to combine the concerns of the Tannaitic Midrashim with those of the homiletic Midrashim (though the compilations of the latter extant today came much later).³

The Tannaitic Midrashim originated in an attempt to derive halakah, and also some haggadah, from a running exposition of the text. As such they are the counterpart to Mishnah, which sees the task of comprehensively compiling halakoth (and some haggadoth) by topics as more urgent than that of providing their Scriptural foundation.⁴

The homiletic Midrashim were formed in the matrix of synagogue worship. The doctrinal and inspirational

¹The next oldest, Lev. R., is at least 50 years younger (Neusner, Comparative Midrash, p. 173) and does not deal with Genesis; the Tanhuma Yelammedenu, which does deal with our unit, dates from the eighth century.

²Bowker, Tg and Rabb Lit, p. 79.

³Ibid., p. 78.

⁴Ibid., p. 69. Later, the Palestinian Talmud would try to provide the scriptural foundations to the Mishnah, preserving the structure of the latter. See, e.g., Neusner, Comparative Midrash, p. 106.

value of the seder for the day was enhanced through an appropriate homily that related each of the verses to the present needs of the congregation. For this purpose, either another verse outside the seder and haftarah for the day, or a halakic question, were introduced, and its discussion artfully led back to the base verse of the seder in such a way as to provide an unexpected insight into the relevance of the base verse.¹ The first technique produced what is known as a proem ("Rabbi X opened [his discourse citing]") homily, the latter a yelammedenu ("let our teacher teach us") homily.²

The combined concerns of Gen. R. are evident in its structure. Basically it is a verse-by-verse commentary on Genesis, just as the Tannaitic Midrashim comment on their respective Pentateuch books. However, it is divided in parashiyyoth, as appropriate to its liturgical use, and prefaced by proem homilies. The detailed structure of each section has been studied by Neusner in Comparative Midrash.³ In 90 percent of cases, a proem homily (the "intersecting verse," form type I) heads the coherent unit of discourse; an intersecting verse appears at the end only in 3 percent of the cases.⁴

¹Bowker, Tg and Rabb Lit, pp. 72 ff.

²Ibid., p. 74.

³See above note on the date for Gen. R.

⁴Ibid., pp. 85 ff.

The verse-by-verse commentary apparently was in existence before the anthological introduction of proem homilies.¹ The latter employ passages from diverse parts of the Hebrew Bible, foreign to the present research. For these reasons we will concentrate our study in the passages with a form type II in Neusner's system (i.e., exegesis: citation of the base verse, followed by comments of Rabbis).² The proem homilies are discussed here only in connection with other units of the passage.

In its present form, an important purpose of the book (or at any rate of form I units) is to underline the harmony of the different parts of Scripture, as Neusner inferred from its structure.³

In previous documents, after dealing with the question of origin, we tried to establish their midrashic character to justify their treatment in this research. This is, of course, unnecessary in the case of Midrashim proper. As for a contextual study, the same considerations apply as to the Targumim.

¹Bowker Tg and Rabb Lit, p. 78. According to him, this Tannaitic-Midrash-like commentary does not cover all the chapters of the Genesis book (p. 79), but then neither does the Mekhilta cover all the chapters of Exodus (p. 70), so the analogy is not broken.

²Form I is the intersecting-verse form, and form III is what Neusner calls "syllogistic," where the concern is not to explain the text but relate it to a given point of doctrine or law as a text-proof, or a link in a chain of text-proofs.

³Comparative Midrash, p. 106.

The critical edition of the text is that of Theodor and Albeck.¹ Theodor lists, in a concise introduction to which we refer the reader, the coddices of the text (a list headed by Lamed = British Museum Add. 27169) and commentaries on the Gen. R. (especially Rashi) collated for the critical apparatus.

Two English translations of the text are available: one by Freedman,² and a more recent by Neusner.³ The latter includes short commentaries after each section, and is the one followed in the present work except as otherwise stated.

Relevant passage

Parashah 44 in Gen. R. deals with the seder that coincides with chap. 15 of Genesis. Our interest here is in sections (1)-(13), covering Gen 15:1-6. The content of each section⁴ is summarized to facilitate an overview.

¹J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck, eds. Bereschit Rabba, mit kritischem Apparat und Kommentar, 2d corrected printing (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1965). Neusner, in the preface to his translation (Genesis Rabbah, p. x) mentions no other critical text.

²H. Freedman, trans. "Genesis," 2 vols., in I. Epstein, ed., Midrash Rabbah (London: Soncino, 1939).

³J. Neusner, ed. Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis, A New American Translation, 3 vols. (Atlanta: Scholars, 1985).

⁴Referred to by Arabic numbers in parentheses, thus: (1).

Summary

(1) Form type I (henceforward f I). Intersecting verse
(henceforward i): 2 Sam 22:31:

As for God, his way is perfect,
the word of the Lord is tried,
He is a shield to all that take refuge in him.

Homiletical commentary (henceforward h): "Perfect"
alludes to Abraham (Gen 17:1), "tried" to his experience in
the furnace of Ur,¹ and "shield" to the oracle of Gen 15:1.

(2) f I, i = Prov 14:16:

A wise man fears and departs from evil.

h = A wise man like Abraham, who fears evil, should
not "fear."

f I, i = Prov 3:7:

Be not wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord.

h = Not what we see with our "own eyes," but the
Lord should be "feared."

f I, i = Prov 11:18:

The wicked does work of falsehood,
but he who sows righteousness has a sure reward.

h = the "righteousness" here alludes to Abraham
(Gen 18:19), who is promised a "sure reward."

(3) f I, i = Isa 41:8-10:

But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have
chosen, the seed of Abraham, you whom I have taken hold
of from the ends of the earth . . . Fear not, for I am
with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God.

¹See above on Jubilees.

h = the "ends of the earth" alludes to Mesopotamia, from which "Abraham" was brought; hence the oracle "Fear not."

f I, i = Isa 41:11-12:

Behold, they shall be ashamed and confounded that were incensed against you; those who strove with you shall be as nothing and shall perish; you shall seek them and shall not find them, even those who contended with you.

h = those who were "incensed" and "strove" against Abraham (or Jacob) are their defeated enemies, from which he is promised protection.

(4) f II (Exegesis of R. Levi):

a. Abraham "feared" some justs had been killed in battle.

b. Abraham "feared" retaliation from the defeated kings.

(Exegesis of "the Rabbis"):

The "fear" was about his reward being already received in this world; God tells him, however, that everything he had made for him was *mgn*, "for free."

(5) f II (Exegesis of R. Yudan):

"After these things" means "forthwith and in consequence" when 'ʿharêy is used, thus not here.

f II (Exegesis of R. Ḥuna):

"After these things" means "forthwith and in consequence" only when 'aḥar is used, as here.

f II (Anonymous exegesis):

"After these things" ('ḥr hdbrym) is actually hyrhwry dbrym, "misgivings": Abraham feared being surpassed in commandment-keeping and good works, and thus that the covenant with him would be set aside in favor of somebody else; God's answer was to the point that the "shield" promise implied that Abraham's merit would protect his offspring, from which somebody would always rise as an atonement.

(6) f III (Implications of the present text):

"Vision" provides us with another synonym for "prophecy." R. Eleazar argues that "vision" is the most forceful.

(7) f II (Exegesis of R. Berekhiah):

"Fear not" the irritation of Shem (Melchizedek) for having killed his descendants; Isa 41:5-7 is read in this light.

(8) f III (Implications of the present text):

"What will you give me" provides us with an instance of a person (among four others there specified) who was allowed to ask from God.

(9) f II/III (Exegesis and implications of the present text according to R. Yudan and R. Aibu):

"I go childless" was a petition of Abraham in case

his descendants were to be wicked; it shows that it is better to die barren than to have disgraceful sons.

f II (Exegesis of R. Eleazar):

"My house" refers to Lot, who coveted the inheritance.

f II (Exegesis of R. Simeon b. Laqish):

"Son of my house" can only be a steward, not Lot. It refers to Eliezer, with whom Abraham pursued the kings as far as Damascus.

(10) f II (Exegesis of R. Samuel bar Isaac):

"You have given me no offspring" was a fact known to Abraham by astrology. But God changed the names of Abram and Sarai to thwart the stars.

(11) f II (Exegesis of R. Yudan and R. Eleazar):

"The Lord. . . to him" in the present context appears repeatedly: "The word of the Lord came to Abraham" (15:1), "behold the word of the Lord came to him" (15:4); the repetition stresses the certainty of a legitimate heir.

f II (Exegesis of R. Huna and R. Eleazar):

"Behold the word of the Lord," in person and not through angels.

(12) f II (Exegesis of R. Joshua):

"Outside" refers to the open spaces of heaven which God showed Abraham.

f II (Exegesis of R. Judah b. R. Simon):

"Look (towards heaven)" (using *nbt*) means look from above, hence God showed Abraham the heavens from above.

f II (Exegesis of "the Rabbis"):

"Look towards heaven" as a prophet (Gen 20:7), not an astrologer. Abraham, as his descendants afterwards, was not allowed to take up astrology; he was not to fear the signs of heaven (Jer 10:2) since (note of R. Levi) he was raised above them.

f III (Implications of the passage):

It indicates a way to thwart the stars (change of name). Other ways are prayer, charity and good deeds, repentance, fasting, and change of domicile.

(13) f II¹ (Exegesis of R. Eliezer b. Jacob):

"From Ur of the Chaldeans" (15:7, cited together with 15:6) means that the angel Michael saved Abraham from the furnace.

f II (Exegesis of "the Rabbis"):

Daniel's companions, not Abraham, were saved from the furnace by an angel; God himself saved Abraham: "I am the Lord who brought you out."

¹In the commentary below his translation, Neusner points out that the issue in this unit (saving through an angel or by God in person) differs from the passage. However, in Comparative Midrash, p. 73, he gives form type II for this section.

Order of the units

J. Neusner, in his commentary, takes notice of the "slight disorder in the earlier units of the *parashah*."¹ Section (4) appears before other f II units which exegete the opening words of Gen 15:1, probably because section (4) was seen as circumstantial information needed to provide a general biographical context to the passage, rather than the specific exegesis of "Be not afraid." This may be compared to the practice of the Palestinian Targum, which often inserts an exegetical expansion of a general character at the beginning of a *seder* (cf., besides PTg Gen 15:1, those at 3:22-24, 18:1).² We may accordingly give this section the same preferential attention.

Analysis of Gen. R. 44:4

The text of Gen. R. for Gen 15:1-6 is long, but it may be justified to cite 44:4 in *extenso* for purposes of comparison with previous documents. As usual the English text is given first and then some observations, particularly on expressions not covered in dealing with PTg Gen 15:1:

¹He is referring to the fact that, while (1)-(3) comment on several aspects of Gen 15:1, and (4) speculates on the motives for the fear of Abraham, (5) takes up again the first element in 15:1, and the next sections (6ff) follow the text systematically; *Genesis R.*, p. 129.

²Shorter expansions can also be found in Gen 6:9, 8:1, 11:1, etc.

1 A) R. Levi made two statements concerning the matter, while rabbis stated only one.¹

B) R. Levi said, "It was because Abraham feared, saying, 'Perhaps it is the case that among those troops whom I killed there was a righteous man or a God-fearer.'"

C) "The matter may be compared to the case of the straw-dealer who was passing by the king's orchards. He saw bundles of thorns and dismounted and collected them. The king looked out and saw him. The man began to hide from him. The king said to him, 'Why are you trying to hide. I needed workers to collect them, but now that you have collected them for me, come and take your fee.' So the Holy One, blessed be he, said to Abraham, 'Among those troops whom you killed were only thorns that already had been cut down: 'And the peoples shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut down that are burned in the fire' (Isa 33:12)."

D) R. Levi made yet a second statement, "It was because Abraham feared, saying, 'Perhaps it is the case that the children of those kings whom I killed will collect troops and come and make war against me. Said the Holy One, blessed be he, to him, 'Do not fear, Abram, I am your shield'" (Gen 15:1).

E) "Just as a shield takes all sorts of spears and stands up against them, so shall I stand by you."

F) Rabbis say, "It was because Abraham was afraid, saying, 'I went down into the fiery furnace and was saved, underwent famine and war and was saved. Perhaps now I already received my reward in this world and will have nothing in the age to come.'"

G) "Said to him the Holy One, blessed be he, 'Do not fear, Abram, I am your shield' (Gen 15:1).

H) "'I am a gift of grace to you' [māgān]; everything that I did for you in this world adds up to nothing. In the world to come, 'Your reward shall be very great' (Gen 15:1). This is in line with this verse: 'Oh how abundant is your goodness, which you have laid up for those who fear you' (Ps 31:20)."

R. Levi. A Palestinian Amora of the third century.²

Two statements. The first "statement," a parable,

¹J. Neusner provides here a bracketed reference to "Do not fear, Abram."

²Enc. Judaica, s.v. "Levi." His identity is clear, since he is quoted next to his contemporary Abba b. Kahana (e.g., in Gen. R. 43:6).

exegetes the beginning and end of the introductory oracle: "Do not fear, Abram . . . your reward will be exceedingly great." The second statement exegetes the remainder of the verse: "I am your shield."

Only one. This redactional note takes cognizance of the fact that the exegesis of R. Levi differs from the usual exegesis in those days. The conservative majority opinion either was not acquainted with, ignored, or rejected his exegesis. Thus this cannot represent the current exegesis of a former era, but only an innovation.

Your fee. Aram. \$krk, "reward." The innovative thought here present is that God does not merely guarantee a reward for Abraham's good works, as in the Palestinian Targum, but shows how the patriarch's latest work (the battle with the kings) was itself a holy work that deserves a reward.¹

Thus R. Levi's exegesis, though presenting a relatively new angle, is firmly anchored in the tradition of reading Gen 15:16 in the light of the immediately preceding events in Gen 14. Abraham suffered from understandable moral scruples after combat, and the point of the oracle is to free him from those scruples.

However, this exegesis did not find favor with the "rabbis," perhaps because, in spite of its ingenuity, it is

¹As noticed in the foregoing analysis of Antiquitates, it is possible to interpret Josephus in a similar way.

difficult to harmonize with the Genesis text.¹

Will collect troops. This was known to us from the Palestinian Targum, and indeed, retaliation as a motive for Abraham's fear is a rather obvious interpretive option that must have been known before the times of R. Levi. The reason why he included it in his exegesis for the passage is that his former explanation accounted nicely for the elements of "fear" and "reward," but not for "shield." He was apparently less interested in this aspect of the passage, and patched up the gap from previous exegetical sources.

Was saved. The explanation of "the rabbis" agrees in the main with the expansion of PTg 15:1. There are also important differences.

As in the Palestinian Targum, Abraham's reflection on his past prosperity raises misgivings about his standing before God. But more than his victory over the kings is here envisioned in this prosperity: it includes an experience attributed to him in Ur (see below on Gen. R. 44:13) and his descent to Egypt from the Negeb (Gen 12:10ff). This inclusiveness is reminiscent of 1QapGen.

On the other hand, the parts of the oracle that

¹The Bible is completely silent about any alleged wickedness on the part of the invading army, though it stresses the wickedness of the invaded cities. If one earns a reward, as R. Levi maintains, for attacking the wicked, then the four kings deserved a recompense sooner than Abraham.

allay this fear also differ. In the Palestinian Targum, it is a matter of the promise of sure reward only. Here, in addition to this promise, the *mgn* is reinterpreted as *magân*. This term means basically "for free" (Tg Gen 29:15).¹ "I am your *mgn*" would thus refer to God's granting prosperity to Abraham "for free," not deducting it from Abraham's merits nor reckoning it as his reward.

This reinterpretation of *mgn* eliminates the idea of protection from the term, which looms so large in older midrashic works. But it is to be expected here since "the rabbis" considered Abraham's concern for his standing before God a sufficient explanation for his fear ("the rabbis stated only one"). The alternative route (preserving the idea of protection in *mgn*) was followed by the Palestinian Targum, but there it necessitated additional explanations for the fear.

A lesser difference concerns the de-emphasis on good works and commandment-keeping. Though the terminology of Genesis Rabbah "receiving one's reward in this world" presupposes the same ideas, neither *mšwh* ("good works") nor *zkw* are even specifically mentioned while they repeatedly appear in the Palestinian Targum.

¹Secondarily, "in vain" (PTg Exod 20:7). See Jastrow, s.v. *magân*.

Analysis of Gen. R. 44:5-13

Because of the large amount of material in these sections, I concentrate on the points more relevant for discussion and comparison with previous documents.

Section (5). Genesis Rabbah preserves important information on the reasons for reading Gen 15:1-6 in the light of the immediately preceding context. R. Yudan and R. Huna both agree that a distinction may be made on grammatical grounds about the import of "after these things," as establishing a connection with the precedent events or not. This point of grammar is attributed to their teacher, R. Yose b. R. Yudan.

R. Huna, however, found the means to maintain that the form employed here does not imply an immediate connection. Unfortunately, we are not told how he interpreted these verses. This would be of great interest since, as seen before, the immediate connection with Gen 14 has been determinant of much of the Rabbinical exegesis on the passage.

Section (6). This section throws light on the equation of "vision" with prophecy, implied in all the Targumim. "Prophecy" heads the list of ten synonyms.

Section (7). This contains a long exegesis of R. Berekhiah (a fourth century Palestinian Amora).¹ It again reads Gen 15: in the light of both Gen 14. It also

¹Bowker, Tg and Rabb Lit, pp. 368, 324.

connects those Genesis narratives with Isa 41:5ff in a way that is reminiscent of the proem homilies. The new reason for the fear of Abraham at which it arrives does not seem completely independent of the exegesis of R. Levi above:

. . . 'and were afraid:' . . . This one [Abraham] feared that one [Shem], thinking, 'Perhaps he has a gripe against me, because I killed his descendants.' That one [Shem] feared this one, thinking, 'Perhaps he has a gripe against me, because I produced wicked descendants.'

Thus both Rabbis assume that the four kings and their armies were wicked, and that their relatives (which include Shem, here identified with Melchizedek) could, in Abraham's estimation, bear a grudge against him. This is evidence that in the Amoraic period the explanation of Abraham's fear advanced in new directions. As Neusner suggests, R. Berekhiah succeeds in incorporating additional elements of Gen 14 (the encounter with Shem-Melchizedek) into this explanation.¹

Section (8). Here the concern with Abraham's bold answer to the oracle surfaces again. Here the solution is that God himself encouraged the patriarch to ask. This solution, say R. Berekhiah and R. Ahi, is not based on the text itself, but "on lore": 'aggadah. However, they immediately show that this "lore" is actually an exegetical inference: "[Abraham] could never had said, 'What will you give me?' unless God had already said to him, 'Ask.'"

¹See Neusner's note, ad loc.

But for a man who has been invited to ask, Abraham's words in Gen 15:2 sound more as resignation about childlessness than as eagerness for descendants. This problem created by haggadic exegesis is treated with still more haggadic exegesis in the next section.

Section (9). Abraham "said before [God], 'Lord of the age, if I am going to produce children who will cause you anger, it is better for me that I go childless.'" Thus, according to R. Yudan and R. Aibu, Abraham's godliness tempered his eagerness for descendance.

Another exegetical contribution found in this section is interesting for comparison:

R. Eleazar in the name of R. Yose b. Zimra: "'My house' refers to Lot, whose greatest desire is to inherit me. 'Dameseq Eliezer', for it was on his account that I went in pursuit after kings as far as Damascus, and God helped me.

R. Eleazar identifies "the son of my house" in Gen 15:2 with Lot and treats "Eliezer" as a common, not proper, noun. This identification was rejected by R. Simeon b. Laqish, whose exegesis fully agrees with all Targums in identifying "son of my house" with the steward. Both authorities, however, imply that Eliezer had a conspicuous role in the victory over the four kings. An allusion to the "wonders," bound up with his action in these traditions,¹ may be found in R. Eleazar's etymologizing Eliezer, "God is my help," in connection with Abraham.

¹See above under Palestinian Targum, ad loc.

But how did Abraham know for sure that he would die childless? It would not do merely to claim that he felt too old to beget a son; both Abraham and Sarah seem to feel otherwise in Gen 16.¹ Thus a solution is offered in the next section.

Section (10). The solution of R. Samuel bar Isaac is that Abraham read his fate in the stars, but God annulled their decree.

The connection between Abraham and astrology is very old² and is usually related, as here, to the events of Gen 15. More specifically, it is tied up with both Gen 15:2 and 5 as, e.g., in Num. R. 2:12:

"And Abraham said: O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing that I go childless" (Gen xv, 2). For Abraham knew from observation of his planet that he was not destined to beget children. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do at that instant? R. Judah, son of R. Simon, citing R. Hanin, who heard it from R. Johanan, said: We may infer that the Holy One, blessed be He, lifted him up to a position high above the vault of the sky and said to him, "From that very planet which showed you that you are not destined to have any progeny, I will prove to you that you will have progeny," as it is stated, "And He brought him forth abroad, and said: Look [habet] now toward heaven," etc. (Gen xv, 5). The expression *habet*, said R. Samuel son

¹I.e., Sarah about Abraham, not about herself.

²Already found in Pseudo-Eupolemus (Eusebius, Praeparatio Evangelica 9:17, in Beševliev, V. et al., eds. Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller, vol. 8, Eusebius Werke, K. Mras, ed., [Berlin: Akademische Verlag, 1982], pp. 504 ff.) who makes Abraham the founder or divulger of astrology (astrology or astronomy).

of R. Isaac, is addressed only to one who is placed above an object, as it is said, "Look from heaven, and behold" (Ps lxxx, 15).¹

Notice that the grammatical argument in Num. R. 2:12 is attributed to R. Samuel bar Isaac, the authority quoted in the present section of Genesis Rabbah. The same connection between Gen 15:2, 15:5, and frustrated Abrahamic astrology is found also in Exod. R. 38:6.²

Section 11. Careful attention is paid to the introductory speech formula and its reiteration. Similar learned observations are made in Gen. R. 53:5, where R. Nehemiah argues that the employment of *dabar*, as distinct from *'am* forms, points to direct revelations.

Section 12. The anti-astrological polemic of (10) is reiterated here in the name of the same R. Judah b. R. Simon mentioned in Num. R. 2:12, among others. Some justification for this polemic can be found in the Genesis text.³ It is not the product of rationalism: some tech-

¹From the Soncino ed. (see above on sources for the Midrash Rabbah).

²In both texts R. Judah b. R. Simon is quoted. For more general connections between Abraham, astrology and Gen 15:5 see above on Philo; see also bShabb. 156 a-b, bNed. 32a.

³Gen 15 deals with vistas of the future, in the course of which both stars and victims are brought to Abraham's attention. As is well known, astrologers and haruspices were at the forefront of ancient "futurology." But in Gen 15, God derives meaning, not from abstruse traits of planet alignment or liver conformation, as astrologers and haruspices do esoterically, but from the most obvious features, e.g., the number of stars and victims. This may contain a veiled anti-occultist irony,

niques proposed (as e.g., incubation of dreams by fasting, by R. bar Mehasia and R. Hama bar Guria in 44:12: 4 K-L) seem to modern minds to be just as questionable as astrology.

Section (13). As in all other midrashic documents, Gen 15:6 does not attract much attention in Gen. R. 44. Indeed, at first sight we may wonder why 44:13 cites Gen 15:6 at all:

1 A) "And he believed the Lord, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness. And he said to him, 'I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess' (Gen. 15:6-7):

B) R. Eliezer b. Jacob: "Michael went down and saved Abraham from the furnace."

C) Rabbis say, "The Holy One, blessed be he, himself saved him, in line with this verse: 'I am the Lord who brought you from the furnace [Ur] of the Chaldeans.'"

D) "And when it was that Michael [not God in person] went down? It was in the case of Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah."

This debate concerns the employment of angels as intermediaries of deliverance,¹ and the point of "the Rabbis" seems to be, again, that Abraham was guided by God with greater immediacy than other lesser characters of the

as in the well-known parody of the "science" of palmistry by Quevedo (Spanish author of the 17th century): "All lines that you may find in hands mean only that the hand folds on the palm side and not on the reverse, and that it folds following joints." Enciclopedia Ilustrada Europeo-Americana Espasa-Calpe, s.v. "Quiromancia."

¹For the ancient traditions that saw in 'wr ksdym "the fire [instead of Ur, the city] of the Chaldeans," see above on Jubilees.

OT.¹ These points seem at first to concern 15:7 exclusively, and no mention is made of faith or righteousness. Why then the citation of 15:6, "run together" with 15:7? Is it merely accidental, both verses being treated as a single *pasuq*?

Though possible, the extant manuscripts do not favor such an explanation.² Besides, Genesis Rabbah "runs together" two or more verses when they are intimately connected in the ensuing commentary.³ We should then assume that the redactor saw 15:6 as intimately connected to 15:7.

Such a connection is not hard to find once we remember that the Targumic traditions link 15:6 to 15:1 through the idea of the protection offered by God in 15:1 on which Abraham relies in 15:6. Protection, too, is the dominant idea in 15:7 as interpreted by Genesis Rabbah. When Abraham evidences full reliance on the offered protection (15:6), the revelation of past instances of protection (15:7) becomes entirely appropriate on the part of the Deity to continue the dialogue with him. Thus both verses were seen as intimately connected. For an immediate confirmation of this explanation, see below on 44:1.

¹See commentary of Neusner, *ad loc.*, and above on 44:11.

²They give separately the *incipit* for each verse. See the text of Theodor and Albeck, Bereschit Rabba, *ad loc.*

³See, e.g., on Gen 15:13-14.

This provides us with a glimpse of the concept of faith in Genesis Rabbah. However, contrarily to the Palestinian Targum, no particular relevance is here given to the righteousness of Abraham in Gen 15:1-6.

Gen. R. 44:1-3 in the
Light of 44:4-13

Scholarly judgment on the late arrival of f I units to the document has been already indicated.¹ This allows us to better see the relationship between the f I and f II forms in the passage.

The connection between Gen 15:1 and 15:7, through the idea of divine protection and the tradition about the "furnace" of Ur postulated above for Gen. R. 44:13 to explain the association of 15:6 with 15:7, is also perceptible in Gen. R. 44:1:

2 B) "The word of the Lord is tried" (2 Sam. 22:31): For the Holy One, blessed be he, tried him in the fiery furnace.

C) "He is a shield to all them that take refuge in him" (2 Sam. 22:31). "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield" (Gen. 15:1).

Similarly, the admonition found in 44:2, 2 A,

"Do not be too smart about what you see with your own eyes. You ask whether you will produce a child or not produce a child? 'Fear the Lord' (Prov. 3:7)." So it is written: Fear not, Abram, I am your shield" (Gen. 15:1).

is rendered much more clear by the anti-astrological

¹Bowker, Tg and Rabb Lit, p. 78. See "The Document" above.

polemic of Gen. R. 44:12.¹

In 44:2, 1 A-B we may have a faint echo of the explanation of "Do not fear" through the idea that a man with so much *zkw* as Abraham has nothing to fear. Since Abraham is said to be wise (which implies reflection on God's will) and "to depart from evil," the "fear" mentioned in Prov 14:16 should not affect him. The idea of "the Rabbis" in Gen. R. 44:4 implies just as much.

But, in contrast, 44:2: 3 A-D links the righteousness of Abraham (seen above to be absent from its expected place in 44:13) with his promised reward in Gen 15:1. Thus other exegetical traditions (as those found in the Palestinian Targum) also have their say here.

Those other traditions are relevant to the analysis of the remaining unit as well. The epithet "Abraham the righteous," found in the Palestinian Targum, helps to explain why Isa 41 was read as an allusion to Abraham in Gen. R. 44:3. Isa 41:2 reads: "Who raised up the righteous man from the east . . . and made him rule over kings?." The "righteous man from the east," in a pre-critical exegesis under the influence of that traditional epithet, could easily be identified with the patriarch who came from Mesopotamia and defeated the four kings.

¹On "fearing the planet" in this Gen 15 context, see Exod. R. 38:6: "So thou art afraid of the planet? . . . as thou livest, it will be as impossible to number thy offspring as it is to number the stars of heaven."

The exegesis of Gen 15:1-6
in Genesis Rabbah

The most obvious feature of Genesis Rabbah, when compared with the foregoing midrashic works, is the abandonment of the continuous paraphrase in favor of a series of comments excerpted from diverse Rabbinical authorities therein named. Often those comments are presented in debate form, in a way which is reminiscent of the Talmudic sugyot.¹

As a consequence, the document provides a privileged window on midrashic procedures. Since it is not bound within the limits of a paraphrase it can and does show not only the exegetical conclusions of the Rabbis but also some of their rationale.

We thus see grammatical distinctions worked out in the light of context (44:5), lists of synonyms that illuminate the specific word-choice of the Biblical passage under discussion (44:6), "parallel" passages meant to supplement and corroborate the information contained in the latter (44:7-9), inferences about the life situation of the patriarch drawn from the implications perceived in the Biblical narratives (44:4,10,12,13), hints found in the emphasis with which the Bible treats a particular topic as evaluated by the repetition of certain phrases (44:11), and

¹For the points of correspondence between the Yerushalmi Talmud and Genesis Rabbah, see Neusner, Comparative Midrash, p. 106.

the homiletical association of inspirational passages based on common expressions (44:1-3).

In this enumeration, inferences about the life situation are probably the most open to challenge. The fluidity with which they were replaced by other views (cf. the traditional interpretation of the fear of Abraham in "the Rabbis," and the alternative interpretations of R. Levi and R. Berekhiah, 44:4,7) suggests that this speculative character was recognized. But by the same token those inferences tell us much about the people who drew them and their theological ideas, which is the concern of next section.

Theological ideas

The idea of reward in
Gen. R. 44:4

In the course of analysis we compared the inferences about the fear of Abraham with previous documents, remarking on their differences. Now it is time to take up the question of what those Rabbinical exegeses of Gen 15:1 (Palestinian Targum, R. Levi, "the rabbis" of Gen. R. 44:4) have in common. A salient feature is that they understand "reward" to refer to the eschatological reward only, while ~~mgn~~ refers mainly to this world. Thus, in Rabbinical midrashim the offer of protection in Gen 15:1 takes second place to the promise of reward, in contrast to the pre-Rabbinical documents.

However, this is so not so much because the concept of protection is toned down, but because the concept of reward is stressed. As a matter of fact, vestiges of previous exegetical constructions on God's protection are kept, including, as seen in the analysis, the connection of Gen 15:6 with 15:1.

Stress on reward is associated with strong concerns about "good deeds" and ~~mswt~~ in midrashic documents for the time of Philo and Josephus onwards. But we have already noted that, as compared with the Palestinian Targum, the ideas of weighing deeds as the basis to determine one's standing before God, though still present in Gen. R., are toned down or deliberately ignored. Given the age of Genesis Rabbah, this implies that, far from originating in the Amoraic period, these ideas began to break down or be deemphasized and phased out in this period.

Later, the concern of Abraham with "the measure of judgment" came to be considered a weakness on his part, in line with the Talmudic injunction against speculation in this matter.¹ A yelammedenu homily is instructive in this respect. We quote from the translation of Bietenhard:

"Nach diesen Ereignissen" usw. (Gen 15,1). Es belehren uns unser Lehrer: Das Brandopfer, wozu wurde es dargebracht? R. Jischma'el sagt: Für die Gebote und für die Verbote. R. Schim'on b. Johaj sagt: Für die Unruhe des Herzens, wie es heisst: "Wenn du die Tage des Mahles um wahren" (Hi 1,5). Du findest dass Abraham sich sorgte um das Mass des Gerichtes. Was

¹See above on the theological ideas of PTg 15:1.

sagte er? R. Levi sagte: es scheint mir, dass ich meinen Lohn in dieser Welt empfangen habe, weil mir der Heilige, g.s. er! gegen die Könige geholfen hat und mich auch rettete aus dem (Feuer)-Ofen. Der Heilige, g.s. er! sprach zu ihm: Da du dich meinetwegen gesorgt hast, musst du ein Brandopfer darbringen, wie es heisst: "Nimm deinen Sohn" (Gen 22,2).¹

If authentic, this bit of R. Levi's teaching illuminates his attitude about the tradition on the fear of Abraham.² We already saw him providing an alternative explanation, based not on the balance of good works, but on the possibility that righteous people were killed in the battle (Gen. R. 44:4). Here we find him dealing with the former tradition. He does not reject it outright but tries to discourage people from following the example that such an image of Abraham, worrying about the balance of his account in heaven, could set. Thus, he implies that Abraham was also afraid in that respect for a time, but his fears made him liable to a burnt-offering for transgression. This means that "restlessness of the heart" in regards to "the measure of judgment" (i.e., one's standing before God) became sinful in the eyes of R. Levi and/or later like-minded Rabbis.

Thus, the evolution of the ideas on the reward for

¹Bereschit III, 13 in H. Bietenhard, Midrasch Tanhuma B. (Bern: P. Lang, 1982), p. 76.

²Notice that he quotes the tradition in a form very similar to that employed by the "Rabbis" with which he is set in controversy in Gen. R. 44:4, including the double allusion to the battle with the kings and the deliverance from the furnace.

good works could be profitably studied in historical research starting from the midrashic interpretation of the passage.

Gen. R. 44:5-13

Among the most important theological concerns of the remaining f II units, we find a stress on the significance of the patriarchal covenant through heightening of the Abraham figure. Though the righteousness of Abraham is not explicitly mentioned, it is implied in his moral scruples about war (44:4,7) and his sense of responsibility for the godliness of his descendants (44:9). It is also implied in his character of "shield of the righteous" (44:5) and the immediacy of his relationship with God (44:11).

Fate is also discussed. The document promotes the idea that a special relationship with God (e.g., prophethood, national election) transcends and surpasses the kind of determinism on which astrology is based (44:9,10,12).

Conclusion

In conclusion, Gen. R. 44:1-13 exhibits a strong emphasis on rewards earned by good works. It transmits traditions to this effect previously seen and adds other thoughts. However, as compared to the Palestinian Targum, those ideas are past their blossom. Just as previous

documents do, it takes "faith" and "righteousness" for granted and does not elaborate on those concepts, but it does develop some "protection" ideas.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

The Exegesis of Gen 15:1-6 in Ancient Midrash

The analysis of these documents shows a highly diversified approach to the Bible text. The interpretations tend to stress specially the first verse (15:1) and, secondarily, the last (15:6). This summary is divided accordingly.

Verse 1

Several of the oldest documents (Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, Samaritan Targum) seem concerned with the chronology of the events described: the Samaritan Targum wants them "in due time," Jubilees in the recurrent "covenant day." Genesis Apocryphon places the events in a biographical chronology, emphasizing the benefits already received from God. The latter are the starting point for the long insertion in the Palestinian Targum that concentrates on the connection with the immediately foregoing narrative (Gen 14).

The revelatory word of the Lord is translated as "prophecy" in the Targumim and "dream" in Jubilees. The motives for Abraham's fear are elaborately developed in Rabbinical exegetical expansions. The Palestinian Targum

and the voice of "the Rabbis" in Genesis R. identify them as the fear of losing the eschatological reward through an excess of this-worldly prosperity. God allays this fear with the promise of reward (other voices dissent).

The first predicate in God's self-revelation is usually understood by the ancients as a personal title, "Protector" or the like. The Palestinian Targum, however, thinks of a defensive object, a shield, and Genesis R. in a "free gift" unrelated to Abraham's merit. Josephus reminds us of God's relationship with Abraham as his Protector, but in connection with Gen 22, not with this passage.

The end of the verse is related by the Genesis Apocryphon to God's protection and God-given riches. Philo identifies the reward with a privileged vision of incorporeal realities, in connection with the sight of heavens in 15:5. Josephus sees the reward as the fruit of good works, which the Palestinian Targum further specifies as being the keeping of the commandments. This fruit, according to both the Palestinian Targum and the "Rabbis" of Genesis R., is reserved for the world to come.

Verses 2-5

Ancient documents are concerned with showing that the question of Abraham, "What will you give me?" is not a thankless lack of recognition about the benefits already received or greed for other gifts, but puzzlement over an apparently meaningless offer. Thus, Genesis Apocryphon

translates the question as "To what end are all these things?" and Josephus as "What is the point [or "pleasure"] of those rewards?" Philo held that the question means both "what else?" (recognizing numerous benefits) and "what, in fact?" pointing to a meaningless offer. The Palestinian Targum has Abraham recognizing both past and future benefits.

The documents are divided over the meaning of *hlk* in 15:2. Jubilees sides with those who think it means to continue in childlessness and Genesis Apocryphon with those who understand it as a reference to death in the not too distant future. The latter then supplements this interpretation, just as the Geniza manuscript of the Palestinian Targum, with a reference to the finality of death as it concerns all possessions.

Ancient midrashic documents are perplexed over the *mešeq* in this passage. Jubilees and Philo, the latter following the LXX, make of this term the name of a handmaid. The Palestinian Targum and some authorities in Genesis R. link the reference to Eliezer with the miraculous *blitzkrieg* of Abraham in chapter 14. Several documents try to combine 15:2-3 into a single statement, and Jubilees also avoids the repeated revelatory formula in 15:4. In compensation, it adds to the narrative the record of Abraham's compliance with the invitation of God in 15:5.

There is also a trend to make more direct the

language in the promise of a son, avoiding references to Abraham's entrails and "seed." In 15:5 the Palestinian Targum, inadvertently or not, combines these terms to speak of the "offspring of your son."

Philo is alone in seeing in the the starry skies an illustration, not only of the numerousness of posterity but also of other elevated characteristics of the latter.

Verse 6

No ancient document dwells on this verse for long. Genesis Apocryphon is merely defective, but Josephus deliberately skips the event. Philo understands believing in God as implying not believing in anything else, an attitude he finds "just," or fully warranted, and as such deserving God's attribution of justice to Abraham.

Several documents and ancient versions express this attribution through a passive verb. The distribution and association of this reading with other deviations from the Hebrew show that its purpose was to smooth out the change of grammatical subject with regards to the former verb in the verse. The literal Targums refrain from making the latter verb into a passive, but no ancient document unambiguously presents Abraham attributing righteousness to God, and only one (Samaritan Targum) might have so done. The Jewish Targumim link this last verse of the pericope to the first by means of a repeated reference to God's Memra. Genesis R. seems to imply as much when running together the

text of 15:6 and 15:7 with a commentary that emphasizes God's protection.

Theological Ideas

The interpretation of Gen 15:1-6 in these documents exhibits certain theological ideas with regularity. Those we list and indicate the stance the documents assume towards them.

Covenant

The emphasis on the covenantal character of Gen 15:16 appears in Jubilees almost to the exclusion of other theological ideas in the passage which are, nonetheless, important for this author elsewhere.

The covenantal awareness of 1QapGen is expressed through the elaboration of the "saving history," typical of covenant formularies, in a long interpretive expansion.

Another constant of those formularies, the exclusivity of trust in the Suzerain, is stressed by Philo. A muffled but still discernable covenantal understanding of the passage is present in Josephus, too.

The reiterated use of "Memra" in the translation of TgO Gen 15:1-6 is typical of covenantal passages. In the STg, too, the momentous significance of the oracle is underlined by pointing to its prophetic character, which in Samaritan tradition appears only sparingly. These elements

are kept in the Palestinian Targum and Genesis Rabbah without additional elaboration.

Protection

The promise of protection, essential to all suzerainty covenants, is clearly grasped by Jubilees and all the Targums. It is emphasized by 1QapGen in the course of its "saving history" in a way which reappears, though displaced, in Josephus. Some elaborations on divine protection occur also in Genesis Rabbah.

Rewards

No particular elaboration of the theme of reward occurs in Jubilees, in spite of eschatological leanings of the author. The studious avoidance of the subject by 1QapGen, however, shows the author as somewhat sensitized towards the concept.

In contrast, Philo clearly connects Abraham's reward with his personal attainment. The promise of reward is repeated by Josephus to the exclusion of other aspects of the oracle, and here, too, the emphasis is on the merit of Abraham.

While the literal Targums have little to say on the subject, the most elaborate discussion appears in the Palestinian Targum, which attempts to account for the mention of "fear" and the promise of reward in terms of a well-reasoned soteriological system. Genesis Rabbah

repeats this interpretation, but adds also the idea of grace and records dissenting opinions on the exegesis of the passage.

Faith

No elaborations on Abraham's act of trusting are present in Jubilees, or indeed, most midrashic documents. The text of 1QapGen is defective at the point where we could expect it to show its understanding of this idea, and the constraints placed by recent history and audience on Josephus also deprive us of his discussion on the subject.

Philo, however, emphasizes both the meritorious character of faith and the exclusiveness of such commitment to God. TgO clarifies the content of such faith by relating it to the revelatory Memra of 15:1, a feature that Palestinian Targum keeps.

Other theological ideas

In these documents not all theological ideas are treated that could potentially be dealt with in an exposition of Gen 15:1-6. The theological theme of holy offspring receives no particular attention from these documents. Righteousness, too, is left without elaboration in most of these midrashic expositions. An exception is STg, which departs from its usual translation of the term to render, ambiguously, either "truthfulness" or "faithfulness."

Conclusion

The "center of gravity," so to speak, of midrashic exegesis for the passage was not at its "geometrical center" but at vs. 1. A secondary center, at vs. 6, is related always to the first.

The main theological ideas these documents saw in need of elaboration are, for the most ancient documents, those connected with a covenantal character of the passage, and for the later, the deservedness of Abraham's reward. The act of faith is uniformly connected with God's promise of protection rather than offspring.

We should now determine the usefulness of these results for a modern exegesis of the passage. Such is the concern of chapter 2.

CHAPTER II

GEN 15:1-6 IN A CURRENT EXEGETICAL ENDEAVOR

As repeatedly explained above,¹ an appreciation of the usefulness of the ancient midrashic authors for a present-day exegesis requires first-hand experience with such endeavor. The aim here is not to pass judgment on every element of those ancient exegeses, nor to make Gen 15:1-6 into a touchstone for such usefulness, but to sample the results of studying ancient midrashic works as part of the process of present-day exegesis.

No claim is made here to exhaust these resources. Not all viewpoints of other exegetes can be incorporated in a unified exposition, even if those other viewpoints are just as valid and comparable in worth. Thus our employment of those ancient sources was necessarily limited by the requirements of a cohesive exegesis.

The exegetical tasks here performed are the usual in the field.² Of course, no "genetic" investigation or

¹See "Introduction" and the end of the foregoing chapter.

²D. Stuart, Old Testament Exegesis, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984); O. Kaiser and W. G. Kümmel, Exegetical Method (New York: Seabury, 1963).

source analysis is performed here, not only because of its near impossibility for the particular passage¹ but also because of its reduced relevance to a study aiming to compare and integrate pre-critical exegeses.

The text of the unit and its translation are established here as a first step, then it is related to the Genesis context through a formal and structural study, its linguistic difficulties reviewed, references and parallels in other OT passages identified, the historical background explored, and the main ideas of the passage explained accordingly.

To this end we employ recent scholarly works as well as relate the results to the previously studied midrashic documents. The first task in the exegetical process, the establishment of a text, can be done quite straightforwardly, but other tasks require a continuous dialogue with scholars. The criteria for this dialogue are explained after dealing with textual issues.

After summarizing the results, we compare them with the conclusions already gained in the study of ancient interpretations to determine their contributions and limitations for an exegetical endeavor on the unit.

¹For a list of authors recognizing this unfeasibility in strong terms (including von Rad's: "absolutely impossible"), see T. P. McGonigal "'Abraham Believed God,'" p. 50, nn. 3-5. On this problem see also A. Jepsen, "'âman" in TDOT 1: 305 ("almost impossible").

The Text of Gen 15:1-6

We are interested in a canonical text with the maximum possible claim to authenticity. This does not imply any particular theory of textual development.¹ To determine this kind of text, I employ the three most ancient and less interdependent forms of the OT available: The Massoretic text (henceforward M)², the LXX (here abbreviated G),³ and the Samaritan Pentateuch (S).⁴ As a corollary from what is known with certainty about textual development, the agreement of any two of these sources prevails over the remaining one in this analysis.

In the ensuing discussion of variants, I also

¹A work by S. Talmon, "The Old Testament Text," in P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, The Cambridge History of the Bible (Cambridge: University Press, 1970) 1: 198, states that "from the very first stage of manuscript transmission" the OT existed in "a variety of textual traditions which seemingly mirror fairly exactly the state of affairs that obtained in the pre-manuscript state of transmission." This brings into question the possibility of attaining any "original" text. For the Pentateuch, however, most current reconstructions of the compositional history arrive at a climax in a fairly unified "final redaction." A single original text, therefore, does not seem farfetched.

²R. Kittel, ed., Biblia Hebraica (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937); K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983). The use of this M and the following abbreviations extends throughout the discussion of the text of the passage.

³J. W. Wevers, ed., Genesis, Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974).

⁴A. F. von Gall, ed., Der Hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1918).

employ the apparatus of the Biblia Hebraica, which includes reference to Qumran texts, the Peshiṭta (P),¹ the Vulgate (V),² and the midrashic documents already seen. Other versions that depend on those already mentioned are quoted only as part of the evidence for the version from which they derive.

Evidence from midrashic works is not placed here on a par with the rest. Exegetical expansions and deviating paraphrases contribute little to this exercise, but portions of the text also attested in more literal translations are deemed valid evidence. Variant readings from the various versions have been retranslated into Hebrew for the sake of uniformity and brevity.

Resultant Consonantal Text

- (1) 'ḥr hdbrym h'lḥ hyh dbr YHWH 'l 'brm bmḥzh l'mr
'l tyr' 'brm 'nky mgn lk škrk hrbh m'd
- (2) wy'mr 'brm 'dny YHWH mh ttn ly w'nky hlk 'ryry
wbn mšq byty hw' dmšq 'ly^c zr
- (3) wy'mr 'brm hn ly l' ntth zr^c whnh bn byty yyrš 'ty
- (4) whnh dbr YHWH 'lyw l'mr l' yyršk zh
ky 'm 'šr yš' mm^cyk hw' yyršk
- (5) wyš' 'tw ḥḥwš wy'mr hbt n' ḥšmymh wspr hkwkbym

¹Peshitta Institute, eds., The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

²R. Weber, ed., Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatum Versionem (Stuttgart: Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1969).

'm twkl lspr 'tm wy'mr lw kh yhyh zr^ck

(6) wh'mn BYHWH wyhšbh lw šdqh

This resultant consonantal text diverges from M at only one site: yyrš instead of ywrš at (3). Thus, though each of the three forms of the Old Testament was given an equal voice at the outset, the result tends to confirm the reliability of this traditional form of the text.

Variants

(1) škrk] wškrk S STg V Jub (1QapGen?) Arm Aeth.¹

This reading makes an important difference for syntax. Reading "and your reward" would preclude taking mgn as a finite verb ("bestow") with š*kârkâ as an object (as in "I am bestowing on you your exceedingly great reward"). Its occurrence in the Samaritan tradition plus Jubilees and the Vulgate attests its presence in an old Palestinian form of the text. Though G has been counted against it here, its occurrence in the Armenian and Ethiopic versions suggests its presence in some forms of the LXX also. Thus it commands considerable textual support and at least deserves a mention in the critical apparatus of the Biblia Hebraica.

From the viewpoint of transcriptional probability, however, this reading produces a smoother, more fluent text than the M reading, thus it should be considered less

¹Armenian and Aethiopic versions are quoted according to the apparatus of the LXX.

likely to be original. Both documentary and transcriptional criteria may be combined to reject it.

(1) hrbh] 'rbh S STg

In spite of its scanty attestation, limited to the Samaritan tradition, this reading ('arbeh) is recommended in the Biblia Hebraica for adoption.¹ Compositional criteria favor this adoption, since it would produce a more balanced parallel with 15:1b: "I am your mgn/ I will greatly increase your reward."

However, it is well known that the spirant laryngeal /h/ has long since disappeared from Samaritan pronunciation. It was often replaced with /'/.² From this viewpoint it is much more likely that the Samaritan written tradition has changed harbeh into 'arbeh than that the Massoretic tradition has changed 'arbeh into harbeh. This Samaritan reading is thus weak on documentary and transcriptional grounds and it has been dismissed here.

(2) dmšq 'ly^c zr] (transp. post ʿryry) w'ly^c zr drmwšqy P
PTg / hw'j + yyrš 'ty P Philo^{mss}; + ywrš 'ty PTg

These readings are present definitely in only two Aramaic documents,³ suggesting that it arose in a Targum or

¹"Legendum est cum Pentateuchi textus Hebraeo-Samaritanus" etc. in the apparati of both editions.

²L. H. Vilsker, Manuel, pp. 27-28.

³Counting Syriac as a form of Aramaic.

Targum-like translation.¹ This would imply the same reading as our resultant text with the addition of *yyrš* 'ty.

Since the text of this verse is difficult, attempts at emendation even from ancient times are to be expected. The P PTg readings seem to be based on 15:3, as modern explanations of the difficult text still are.² If such had been the original text, it would be very unlikely that it had changed to the difficult extant form we have in M S G.

Thus the readings are secondary both on documentary and transcriptional grounds.

(3) *zr^c] bn(ym) P PTg*

All Targumim replace *zera^c* at this spot by a synonym for descentance: *nwp* STg, *wld* TgO. We have discussed the probable reasons in the foregoing chapter.³

¹However, J. Skinner reports that "some manuscripts" of Philo have *ho de huios Masek tēs oikogenous mou houtos Damaskos Eliezer klēronomēsei me* or similar text (ICC 1: 278).

²See e.g., E. A. Speiser, Genesis: Introduction, Translation and Notes, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 1:110-111.

³This uniform trend confirms the Targumic character of the reading offered by P in 15:2b -3a (essentially the same as in PTg). The PTg has the plural form *bnyn*, P the singular *bn*.

(3) **ywrš**] **ywrš** M P TgO PTg

The resultant text reading **yiraš** at the end of vs. 3 is clearly supported in S and G,¹ and all versions comprised in this study but not cited above are at least compatible with it.² The reading **yiraš** could conceivably have been introduced carelessly from vs. 4 (**yiraškā**); on the other hand, **ywrš** (**yôrêš**) could have been misread for **ywrš** in the square Aramaic ("Hebrew") script used near the turn of the era by Jews (but not by Samaritans) where w and y are very close to each other,³ or introduced for stylistic variation.

Since this variant is not important from the viewpoint of sense, both readings being equivalent, we follow documentary criteria in this case. Perhaps because of its minor significance, the variant is not reported in the apparatus of the Biblia Hebraica.

¹The LXX renders other cases of *Futurum instans* participles (Gesenius, Grammar, section # 116 p) in Genesis with a present tense (6:17; 20:3; 24:13f; 50:5); so also the participle **hwk** in vs. 2. Thus if the LXX translator had read here **ywrš** in his Vorlage, **klêronomei** would be expected. The future **klêronomêsei** that we actually have is, on the other hand, perfectly consistent with the Imperfect attested in the Samaritan Pentateuch.

²The reading in V, **heres meus erit**, is especially ambiguous. It is consistent with a participle as its Vorlage; however, Jerome uses this periphrasis (**heres esse**) to translate **ywršk** (an undisputed finite verb) in the next verse.

³See, e.g., the Dead Sea Scrolls script, especially the copper scroll.

(4) *whnh...l'mr] wy'mr lw Jub lQapGen, (+ YHWH) P*

This reading, *wayyo'mer lô*, has minimal documentary authority. It seems to intentionally avoid the difficulty of a new oracular introduction within the same vision as Gen 15:1. The great antiquity of the documents involved, and the fact that their reading is clearly secondary, is an indirect evidence of the excellence of the text contained in M S G.

(4) *mm^cyk] mm(y)k G*

This part of the verse is not translated literally by STg, TgO, or P, and thus they do not presuppose real variant readings.¹ The G reading (*ek sou = mime[y]kâ*), however, can be explained as being present in its Vorlage. It is consistent with an accidental omission of an *‘ayin*. The uneasiness that ancient readers felt for *mimmê^ceykâ*, as evidenced in the translations, may have helped to spread and/or preserve such unintentional variation in the environment from which the Vorlage of G arose.

(5) *hšmymh] hšmym S STg*

The old accusative ending in the lemma (*-h* in *haššāmāymāh*) is represented in the versions by prepositions preceding the word for "heavens" (P TgO PTg Jub), compounded with the verb (V) or both (G).

¹For the Targumic character of the P in this part of Genesis, see above on (2).

The reading of M G is superior, not only on documentary grounds but also from the viewpoint of sense. When *nbt* is followed by a directional indicator, as, e.g., the old accusative ending, it designates a generalized viewing (1 Kgs 18:43); otherwise a more concentrated stare.¹ The first is obviously the intended meaning here.

(6) *wh'mn*] + *'brm* G P V^{***} PTg / *wyhšbh*] *wyhšb*/*wyḥšb* G P V PTg Jub / *šdqh*] *lšdqh* G P V PTg TgO

This set of interrelated variants has been discussed above when dealing with PTg, concluding that the readings there represented are secondary.

The distribution of the readings among the witnesses, and their association with the insertion of "Abraham," substantiates Cazelles' suggestion that "le grec a lu un passif, peut-être pour éviter de faire d'Abraham le sujet."² But the distribution suggests a Targumic origin, from which TgO has not entirely freed itself,³ and not an exclusively Septuagintal origin, pace Oeming.⁴

¹Koehler-Baumgartner, Lexicon, s.v. "*nbt*": schauen as opposed to blicken.

²"Connexions et Structure de Gen. XV," Revue Biblique 69 (1962): 333.

³Neither has Jerome completely abandoned the structure of the sentence as it appears in the reading of the Greek (which is also that of NT and Vetus Latina, all forms that are relevant to the understanding of his decision).

⁴ZAW, 95: 195.

Vocalization

The way in which the consonantal text was vocalized in reading can usually be judged from the translations. The vocalization of M is supported throughout the passage, with the exceptions that follow.

Though the consonants for *mgn* in 15:1 are unanimously attested, the vocalization *mâgên* ("shield") of M is supported by only one witness (PTg). It is not supported even by the supposed *vera imago* of M, TgO (as noted under that heading in chapter 1).

P renders it through an imperfect, 'sy^ck ("I will protect you"); G through a present, *hyperaspizô sou* ("I protect you"); Vg through a noun of agent, *protector tuus sum* ("I am your protector"). As argued before, since most of these versions are quite literal in the rest of this passage, it is not likely that they suddenly and independently decided to turn creative at the same point; it is more likely that they understood *mgn* as a participle, (which is entirely consistent with their various translations): *mêgên* ("one who protects"). Most Aramaic versions (STg, TgO, lQapGen) render it *tqwp*, "protection." This is also consistent with a vocalization of this word as a participle.

The lone correlation of PTg with the M vocalization at this point is surprising, given the fact that this Targum is the least literal of all, and should alert us to

the possibility that the M vocalization was affected by some exegetical activity along the course of its transmission. This surprising relationship also emphasizes a distinction between the M consonantal text and the Massoretic vocalization. The generally excellent quality of the former has been verified above; the latter may be slightly less reliable.¹

A less important variant in vocalization may be found in 15:2. G Jub read **mšq** as a proper noun, **Maseq**, instead of M **mešeq**. Other vocalizations may underlie the various translations for this hapax of the Hebrew Bible.²

Summary

The text of our unit is firmly established on the witness of the three major Old Testament textual traditions. Variants affecting the consonantal text are

¹From the viewpoint of translation and exegesis, establishing the most likely vocalization for a word of the text is almost as important as the consonants themselves. Therefore some hint of the facts cited above could also be profitably mentioned in the apparatus of the Biblia Hebraica. An example in which such profit can be obtained may be cited. Were "shield" the predominant translation in the old versions, then the parallel metaphors in Deut 33:29 and Pss 18:3,31; 84:11; 144:2 cited by C. Westermann (Genesis 12-36 [Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1981], ad 15:1b) would contribute support to the reading of "shield" against other vocalizations. But in the light of the fact that only a single document, and the most paraphrastic one at that (PTg), supports the M vocalization "shield," those parallels may mean quite another thing. They suggest a "canonical interpretation" in the PTg, and, therefore, favor a secondary origin for such a vocalization.

²See below, section "Lexical and Grammatical Analysis: Inquiry about the Promise."

relatively minor and the superior readings can be established with assurance. Vocalization differences (as in mgn), however, are more substantial and, consequently, deserve some attention. For this textual study, a wider documentary basis than that indicated in the apparatus of the Biblia Hebraica was found necessary.

Form, Structure, and Contextual
Function of Gen 15:1-6

Form and structure are often discussed together in exegetical works,¹ and the contextual function of this particular passage is best approached from a structural viewpoint.

The dialogue with recent interpreters is here indispensable. But since "the great importance of the promises to the patriarchs in the book of Genesis has spurred a tremendous amount of secondary literature,"² it can only be selective, not exhaustive. Two recent works on Genesis have been highly commended: those of C. Westermann and G. W. Coats.³ Thus this research starts with them and

¹The rationale for close-linking form and structure can be informed by P. Ricoeur, "Sur l'exégèse de Genèse 1,1--2,4a," in R. Barthes et al., Exégèse et Hermeneutique (Paris: Seuil, 1971), p. 84; and P. Beauchamp, "Autour du premier chapitre de la Genèse," *ibid.*, p. 63.

²Childs, Introduction to the OT, p. 150.

³C. Westermann, Genesis, in S. Herrmann and H. W. Wolff, eds., Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament, section 1: 2 vols. (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979). English translation by J. J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publ. House, 1985). G. W. Coats, Genesis, with an

their bibliographic repertoire, spreading to other works as the process of investigation requires it. It also includes previous dissertations on Gen 15:6.

The purpose of the next subsections is to describe the organization of the Abraham stories (Gen 12-25), and particularly of "the covenant between the pieces" (Gen 15). This aims to discover the relationship of Gen 15:1-6 with the larger units.

The Place of the Unit among the Abraham Stories

To determine the arrangement of the narratives it is indispensable to first identify the constituent parts. Westermann, building on the work of Gunkel, has identified the "gross classification" categories in these stories according to type of presentation as: (1) dramatic narratives, (2) promises, (3) journey accounts, and (4) genealogies.¹ This can be further refined as (1) family stories (15:1-6, 17:1-27, 18:1-6, 21:1-7, 12:10-20, 20:1-18, 16:1-16, 21:8-21, 19:30-38), (2) territorial conflict stories (13:5-13, 21:22-32, 26:18-33), (3) accounts of

Introduction to Narrative Literature (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983). S. De Vries, "A Review of Recent Research in the Tradition History of the Pentateuch" in K. H. Richards, ed., Seminar Papers, Society of Biblical Literature (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), p. 461, singled these two works for praise.

¹C. Westermann, The Promises to the Fathers (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), pp. 57 ff. At (1), he just uses the expression "narrative" which, however, is not by itself clearly distinct from "story."

success (chaps. 23, 24), and (4) theological narratives (22:1-19, 18:17-33, 12:1-3, 15:1-6).¹

Sutherland,² appealing to research on the Jacob cycle and observations of Frank Cross, excludes chaps. 23-25 as belonging to the Isaac toledoth, rather than Abraham's. G. W. Coats similarly concludes the Abraham narratives (though not the "Abraham saga") at 22:19; the rest belongs to "death reports."³ Both authors diagrammed the units within chaps. 11-22 in a palistrophic (chiastic) pattern;⁴ both also note that the chiasm is imperfect.⁵

The present effort,⁶ inspired by their diagrams, confirms in general these results. I obtained a fully palistrophic pattern by keeping together binary blocks (e.g., "family strife" after each "threat to wife").

¹Ibid., pp. 59 ff.

²Sutherland, "Genesis 15:6," pp. 34-45; later reproduced with minor editorial changes as "The Organization of the Abraham Promise Narratives," in Zeitschrift für Altestamentliche Wissenschaft 95 (1983): 337-43.

³Coats, Genesis, pp. 97-98.

⁴For the various terms used in describing this kind of pattern, see Sutherland, "Gen 15:1-6," p. 38, n.61. I feel that "chiastic" suggests a pointed end at the center, and thus it is more appropriate for patterns with an odd number of terms, the center one not being duplicated.

⁵Sutherland, "Gen 15:6," pp. 39-40, explicitly says so; Coats, Genesis, pp. 97-8, introduces "tales of family strife" that interrupt the palistrophic pattern.

⁶To avoid unnecessary digressions, we have kept as far as possible their thematic categories.

Whatever it is worth, this simplified diagram follows:

- A. Divine commands & Abraham's obedience (11:27-12:9)
- | B. Threat to wife (12:10-20) & family strife (13:1-3)
- | | C. Divine revelation (13:14-18) & care of Lot (ch 14)
- | | | D. Covenant (ch 15) & secondary offspring (ch 16)
- | | | D' Covenant & secondary offspring (ch 17)
- | | C' Divine revelation (ch 18) & care of Lot (ch 19)
- | B' Threat to wife (ch 20) & family strife (ch 21)
- A' Divine commands & Abraham's obedience (ch 22)

There is general scholarly agreement in that the covenant or "promise" stories (chaps. 15-17) are surrounded by Abraham/Lot stories,¹ as here. The "halves" of these binary blocks, in some cases, have not been perceived as interrelated by most interpreters. This could cast doubts on whether the text was really organized around a palistropic pattern. Previous students have concluded that the text is indeed carefully arranged and planned in advance.² Thus the arrangement was probably intentional.

The thematic disparity of some, but not all,³ binary blocks may have been designed to keep traditional

¹Thus already H. Gunkel, Genesis, HKAT (1901) 159-62, as cited in Sutherland, "Gen 15:1-6," p. 34 and in Westermann, Promises, pp. 58-9. Coats, Genesis, echoes the concept in his diagram, and in p. 123 follows N. Lohfink, Die Landverheissung als Eid (Stuttgart: Kathol. Bibelwerk, 1967), pp. 84-6, in admitting a terminological connection.

²Westermann, Promises, p. 57 and, of course, the previously cited authors of diagrams.

³E.g., in D-D' the problem of how to relate the covenants, including their promises about Isaac, to the secondary offspring (Ishmael) is posed by the reported facts themselves.

narrative sequences undisturbed. In any case, the relationship between our block halves would be a close one at the beginning, center and end of the diagram, while it would be somewhat more lax in other less privileged positions. This is just what one would expect from a carefully designed arrangement.¹

The elaborate character of the text arrangement in blocks does not preclude the idea that the narrative sequence was meant to represent the natural sequence of events. The multiple verbal connections between the chaps. 14 and 15, e.g., the opening formula, *rekuš*, *yâša'* and other terms already listed by scholarly research,² indeed suggest that a real connection is intended.

All blocks, as here identified, seem to communicate time and again the same message: God intervened amidst trying times to set apart and preserve for Himself a godly family, a holy seed. Abraham was simultaneously a prophet and a loyal relative, a man of God and a family man.³ This analysis of the narrative arrangement suggests that

¹Sutherland claims the same conspicuousness of position for the "theological narratives," "Gen 15:6," p. 45 = ZAW 95: 343.

²Lohfink, Landverheissung, pp. 84-6; Coats, Gen, p. 123.

³The prophet status of Abraham is obvious from the titles we give to the blocks, except for the "Threat to wife and family strife." But it is precisely there where we find Abraham called "prophet" (Gen 20:7).

the climax of the Abraham cycle appears in the covenant/promise chapters.

The climactic character of covenant chapters was also remarked in the work of previous students.¹ The Abraham narrative sequence "moves to a center focused on the covenant between Abraham and God."²

We have occasion to study the relationship of the unit to covenant ideas later on in this research.³ The present point is that this shared understanding of the Abraham narratives implies that Gen 15:1-6, though not

¹Coats, Gen., p. 97, makes the Covenants the central part, while Sutherland, "Gen 15:6," p. 39, has them one step removed from the center. Sutherland tries to move Ishmael into the center as the "obstacle personified" to the offspring promise, in harmony with his concept of the tension between promise and obstacle as the "underlying frame of reference which links the narratives together" ("Gen 15:6," p. 38), which "ultimately centers primarily on offspring" (ibid., p. 41). However, his diagram also implies that the promises were much more comprehensive than merely the issue of offspring. Thus the Ishmael problem as focus of the whole series of narratives is not completely satisfactory, though his relative success in the elaboration of the palistrophic pattern suggests that he cannot be far from the best solution. In my view, if one insists on identifying a dramatic tension, this may be found in the highly demanding but at the same time highly rewarding relationship with God that Abraham experiences. This relationship is highlighted in the covenant chapters (15, 17).

²Coats, Gen., p. 98.

³Another relationship, that of covenant with secondary offspring, is not here explored. Though Gen 15-16 constitute one "block" in the preceding analysis, our unit is far removed, from the viewpoint of position in the text and narrative sequence, from the problem of secondary offspring. Thus, though we deal with the relationship of Gen 15:1-6 with Gen 15:7-21, we do not concern ourselves with Gen 16.

necessarily the exact center in the Abraham narratives,¹ is deliberately close to its heart.²

This means, on the basis of "the literary shaping of Genesis 12-15," that "the writer intended us to understand that at chapter 15 a new stage is being introduced in the unfolding narrative of Abraham's relationship to the promise."³ This "new stage" demands our attention, which now proceeds to structural analysis.⁴

Structure of Gen 15

The oracle of salvation: Key to the structure?

According to Westermann, the structure of the chapter is largely determined by the "oracle of salvation" literary form.⁵ In response to a complaint of the faith-

¹The centrality of this chapter for the whole series of narratives can be deduced, apart from structure, from the independence of its content. Hoftijzer, Verheissungen, p. 23.

²Westermann reaches a similar conclusion: "Mit Absicht sind sie [15:1-6 und 7-21] in die Mitte des Abraham-Kreises gestellt worden." Am Anfang: 1 Mose (Neukirche: Neuk. Verlag, 1986), p. 173.

³T. E. McComiskey, The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the OT Covenants (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), p. 60.

⁴"L'analyse structural joue le rôle de révélateur à l'égard du travail d'interprétation inscrit dans le text lui-même." P. Ricoeur, "Sur l'exégèse de Genèse 1,1--2,4a," in Barthes, Exeg. et Herm., p. 84.

⁵Promise, p. 15. Though in the immediate context he is dealing with Gen 15:1-6 only, he later relates the rest of the chapter to the same structure (pp. 23-24). On this, see Lohfink, Landverheissung, p. 48, n. 7.

ful, the deity gives a pledge of salvation and prosperity for the future. This type of analysis results in the following structure:

- 1a Introduction: the word of Yahweh comes to Abraham.
- 1b Pledge of salvation and prosperity.
- 2 Reply: statement of grievance.
- 3 (bis)
- 4 God's answer:
 - a) Future salvation: a consanguineous heir.
 - b) Confirming sign.
- 5 Conclusion: Abraham's faith.
- 7 Expanded self-introduction.
- 8a Statement of grievance and request of sign.
- 8 ff Signs.¹

This structural delineation, however, has been found unsatisfactory, even though elements of salvation oracle can be recognized in the chapter. Such literary form "ist nicht der Hauptschlüssel" of the chapter.²

The question of the relative importance of this literary form in the chapter is not mere hair-splitting. An emphasis on the oracle of salvation as the master key of the passage may be employed to support the conclusion that the "reward" and "protection" in the oracle (15:1) have no concrete referent; the passage "will nur ganz allgemein sagen, dass Abraham ein Heilswort von Jahwe empfängt."³ In such case the exegesis of the unit should pay scarce

¹Lohfink, Landverheissung, p. 48.

²Ibid., p. 49.

³C. Westermann, Genesis, in S. Herrmann and H. W. Wolff, eds., Biblischer Kommentar: Altes Testament (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 2: 258 ff.

attention to this content.

The reliability of such a judgment, however, depends on establishing beyond all reasonable doubt the existence in antiquity of a "stylized formula" for salvation oracles and its reproduction in our passage in such a way that "every listener" could recognize it as such.¹ But here is where we confront serious problems.

Westermann supports this position by quoting one such oracle preserved in cuneiform records as coming from Ištar to Essarhaddon, an Egyptian text that mentions the name of the god Amun, and a tradition from the Inca empire, related to the sun-god Inti.²

Those parallels, however, are far from furnishing anything like a convincing pattern for our passage. The fact of the presence of protector deities in the pantheon of the ancients (as well as in polytheist religions of all times) is indisputable, but the very ubiquity of such conceptions should make us wary of "parallels" stated in general terms only. This is specially true when trying to establish a particular biblical passage as stereotyped, and thereby claiming that its actual content resides in the fact of the allusion to a formula and not in the analytical connotation of its parts.

I am not alone in raising this point. Van Seters

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

observes that the problem of motivation for the divine offer of assistance

. . . cannot be lightly dismissed by the excuse that the writer was unconsciously using the court language of his day. On the contrary, the use of such a form has the appearance of being a deliberate and conscious choice, and any solution to the interpretation of v. 1 must take seriously these problems raised by the forms of the text.¹

It is true that the extra-Biblical oracles quoted contain expressions of the "Be not afraid" type, but then it is difficult to imagine productions in the name of protector deities that would not include such encouragement in one way or another.² Thus, such a pattern lacks the peculiarity of expression necessary to constitute a formula that "every listener" could immediately recognize.³

But even if this "formula" is accepted, the parallels are still far removed from our passage in verbal

¹Abr. in Hist., p. 255.

²The "formula," as given by J.-G. Heintz (cited by Westermann) in "Oracles Prophétiques et 'Guerre Sainte' selon les Archives Royales de Mari et L'Ancien Testament," Vetus Testamentum Suppl. 17 (1969): 124, n. 3, is constituted by elements that follow naturally from the very idea of a protector deity. The latter expressed encouragement, a reason for hope grounded in his/her divine character, and the concrete way in which the protection was to take place:

1) "'Ne crains point!' et expressions apparentées."
 2) "'Car,' en hébreu 'ein begründendes ki'."
 3) "Une auto-présentation, et éventuellement une autopredication divine."
 4) "Un verbe d'action, de connotation (a) soit positive, à l'égard du destinataire de l'oracle . . . (b) soit négative, à l'égard de ses ennemis."

³Wenham, Genesis, p. 327, recognizes that "given its ubiquity in Scripture, it would appear dangerous to use this formula ['Do not be afraid'] to date the oracle."

imagery. This applies both to the Istar oracle¹ and the Egyptian text.² The last example, from the Inca empire, must be rejected outright because no verbally accurate records of that empire are extant.³ Nor has Dion's

¹It included a "shield" metaphor, but only 22 lines removed from the previous "fear not" expression. See René Labat et al., Les Religions du Proche-Orient Asiatique (Paris, Fayard/Denoël, 1970), pp. 257, 258; Hugo Gressmann, ed., Altorientalische Texte zum Alten Testament (Berlin and Leipzig, de Gruyter, 1926), pp. 281-2, or the cuneiform transcriptions therein cited. The immediate context is "Esarhaddon, in the city of Assur I will give you long days and eternal years; Esarhaddon, in Arbela I am your gracious shield." This differs from Genesis, where no allusion to city or other places, sacred or not, is found. Besides, we have no mention of booty or "reward," but rather of the destruction of enemies.

²It does not assume an oracular form, but rather expresses the confidence of the devout in the object of his devotion: "Amun is behind me, I fear nothing because Amun is strong." There is no mention of shield. One such allusion has been found in the prayer of Ramses III to Amun in behalf of his son (Papyrus Harris, Pl. 22, in J. H. Breasted, Ancient Records of Egypt, vol. 4 [Chicago: University Press, 1906], pp. 140, 141 [record 246]): "Make his body to flourish and be youthful daily, while thou art a shield behind him for every day." Here, however, there is no mention of fear to be allayed by the deity, so the parallel is faulty again. Both Egyptian texts contain no mention of reward or booty, either, but only the very general idea of protection by the deity.

³This tradition appears not only in the chronicles of C. de Molina and P. Sarmiento--Westermann's sources through G. Lanczkowski--but, more cogently, in those of the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (Comentarios Reales 5: 21, 22), a 16th century writer of royal blood who attests to having heard this specific tradition from his best source. He, however, places the events in times of Inca Viracocha, attributes the vision to another deity and reproduces the encouragement message with important differences in wording. These fluctuations in the Inca tradition make it unsuitable for the research at hand. Last, but not least, one has to contend with the possibility of contamination from Christian sources.

In any case, these traditions are highly hetero-

enlarged list of parallels from the seventh century B.C., which he claims provide a far better background to the Genesis "Do not fear" passages than second millennium ones,¹ introduced any fundamental difference in this regard.

Moreover, the reliability of such form analysis for this passage has been challenged by several scholars. Coats has argued that 15:1 "does not itself represent the form of an oracle of salvation . . . but only an introduction to divine speech."² Thus the judgment that the oracle of salvation "is not the master key" to the passage seems much more tenable.³

geneous, not only in provenance and date but also in content: the Inca vision tradition reproduced by Westermann sees the "Fear not" entirely within the visionary context: the Inca was scared by the apparition and tried to flee. Instead, the Istar oracle referred obviously to the life situation (protection from enemies) and not to any momentary emotion; other points of contact do not obtain either, since there is no mention of a shield in the Inca traditions on the royal revelations.

¹H. M. Dion, "The Patriarchal Traditions and the Literary Form of the 'Oracle of Salvation'," Catholic Bible Quarterly 29 (1967): 198-206. But see Lohfink, Landverheissung, p. 49-50 n. 50.

²Gen, p. 124.

³This is not to deny the similarities of our passage to "salvation oracles." Both Westermann (Promises, p. 15) and Coats (Genesis, p. 124) appeal to the fundamental work of Begrich ("Das priesterliche Heilsorakel," ZAT 52 (1934): 81-92) in establishing this genre, which studies passages with an unmistakably related content, including the "Fear not, for I am with thee" encouragements of Isa 41:10, 43:1, etc. The connection of Gen 15 with these Deuteroisaianic passages is at least as old as Genesis Rabbah (q.v.) and is frequently mentioned

Other structural analyses

Relegating the "oracle of salvation" to a humbler place, in turn, frees the analysis from artificial classifications, as, e.g., asserting that 15:8 is a lament or "statement of grievance,"¹ in order to fit it into the structure of a salvation oracle. Similar questions have been raised about 15:2,3: "one would expect the reverse of the order here present" for a salvation oracle, i.e., first a lament, then the reassurance.²

Another literary form sometimes utilized to explain Gen 15:1-6, the "theophanic legend," has been shown not to fit the passage well.³

Instead, the passage in its present form may be determined simply as a dialogue.⁴ This can be established by observing natural categories in the text which are able

today, e.g., van Seters, Abr. in Hist. & Trad., p. 265. However, we should take up the question of the precise relationship of our passage to those other expressions of encouragement only after finding a more satisfactory key to the structure of Gen 15:1-6.

¹A point made by Lohfink, Landverheissung, p. 49. For the claim, see above Westermann's position.

²Van Seters, Abr. in Hist., p. 255.

³Ibid., pp. 261-2. Among interpreters who follow this structural identification we should mention here F. R. VanDevellder, "The Form and History of the Abrahamic Covenant Traditions," Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1967.

⁴Coats, Gen, p. 125.

to explain its distribution,¹ rather than starting from preconceived literary forms. In this way, several scholars have noticed close correspondences between 1-6 and 7-21. We start with the observations of Lohfink:

1-6	CORRESPONDENCES	7-21
1	Promissory word of Yahweh	7
2	Abraham's word beginning with 'adonây YHWH	8
4	Yahweh's reply	9
5a	External events	10-12, 17
5b-6	Word of Yahweh alluding to "seed." ²	18-21

Thus, except for 4-9, each division is determined by alternating interventions ("words") of Yahweh and Abraham in dialogue. This suggestion has been fruitful. Van Seters adopted this structural analysis in general terms.³ Another scholar, F. R. VanDevellder, made a similar

¹Beauchamp, "Autour du 1er ch. de la Genèse," p. 60, describes this procedure as analyzing "classes de mots ou contenus . . . catégories naturelles" to "rechercher si . . . cela constitue un principe de distribution."

²Lohfink, Landverheissung, p. 45. He gives Westermann the credit for working out the "essential" parts of this structure.

³Abr. in Hist., pp. 260-1. He adds a subdivision of "Abraham's word" which for the first pericope consists in (a) invocation 'adonây YHWH, (b) lament, and for the second (a) invocation 'adonây YHWH and (b) prayer for a sign. He also subdivided "Yahweh's reply:" in the first pericope, as (a) promise, (b) a sign which extends the content of the promise; similarly, in the second pericope, as (a) covenant, (b) omen-prophecy qualifying the covenantal promise.

analysis, keeping the same five-fold division in a simplified form.¹

Thus the observation of recurrent categories of content in the text has led several scholars to a successful determination of the underlying structure of the text as parallel panels. This analysis is solid, as shown by research performed on chap. 17.²

Recently Wenham has presented the "two scenes which run in close parallel" in a six-fold division.³ The sixth

¹"Form and History," pp. 158-160. I have standardized the tabular disposition, adding the title and shortening the last entry from paragraphs in pp. 158 and 160:

1-6	CORRESPONDENCES	7-21
1	A word from God to Abraham	7
2-3	An objection raised by Abraham	8
4	A reply from God to Abraham's objection	9
5	A sign from God to confirm his word	17
6	Concluding summary and comment	18.

²S. E. McEvenue, The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer (Rome: Pontifical Bible Institute, 1971), p. 159. After experimenting with diverse structural analyses for Gen 17, including palistrophes, he has shown that the most satisfactory diagram for the structure of that chapter is one arranged in parallel panels, ABCDE/A'B'C'D'E'. Chap. 17 is the block matching Gen 15-16 in the general palistrophic conformation of the Abraham narratives seen above, and thus is especially relevant to our passage.

³Wenham, Genesis, p. 325, presents the following table:

[1-6	CORRESPONDENCES	7-21]
1	Yahweh's word	7
2-3	Complaint about childlessness	8
4	Yahweh's reaction	9
5	Public act	16, 17
5	Yahweh's word	13-16
6	Conclusion	18-21.

division comes as a result of his recognition of a "Conclusion" as distinct from the last "word of Yahweh." A much more detailed structure is offered by Coats. He has developed the correspondences into the following diagram:

1-6	I. <u>Promise dialogue</u>	7-21	II. <u>Promise dialogue</u>
1	A. Yahweh speech	7	A. Yahweh speech
1a	1. Transition and word formula		1. Word formula
1b	2. Self-revelation		2. Self-revelation
2	B. Abram's request for surety	8	B. Abram's request for surety
	1. Speech formula		1. Speech formula
	2. Request		2. Request
3	C. Abram's complaint		
4	D. Yahweh's promise		
5a	E. Yahweh's instruc- tions	9	C. Yahweh's ins- tructions
	1. Speech formula		1. Speech formula
	2. Instructions for surety		2. Instructions [for surety] ¹

¹He says here "for the selection of animals," but cf. II. B.

	10-11	D. Execution of instructions
5b F. Promise speech	12-21	E. Yahweh's promise
	12	1. Circumstances
	13-16	2. Promise speech
1. Speech formula	13a	a. Speech formula
2. Promise	13b-16	b. Promise
	17	3. Circumstances
	18-21	4. Promise speech
6 G. Conclusion. ¹		

In this form, however, the panel structure is not so systematic. Coats recognizes numerous correspondences between the two chapter parts but also some departures from parallelism. Though this appears reasonable, one wonders if all departures are really supported by the evidence. In particular:

1. Note that vss. 2-3 can be divided in two halves, closely matched in content to each other:

2b 'ânokî hólêk '°riri	3b li lo' nâtattâh zâra°
2c ûben mešeq beyti hú' dammešeq '°li°ezer	3c ben beyti yôrêš 'oṭi

Thus it seems somewhat artificial to make the first verse into a "request for surety," but the second into a

¹Genesis, p. 122-3. I have arranged the diagram in parallel columns to facilitate the synoptic appreciation of correspondences, and suppressed the subdivision of some categories for the sake of brevity.

"complaint."¹ Then, if the distinction is abandoned, both verses are comprised within the request for surety, and the correspondence with the second panel is strengthened.

2. Also, his "dialogue I" ends with an appropriate "conclusion" in this diagram, but not "dialogue II." This is a little strange for two dialogues with so many correspondences. Given the prominence of conclusions in texts, the reader comes to expect one in dialogue II, also. This expected conclusion appears in the analyses of both VanDevellder and Wenham.

3. Coats has recognized that the content of the promise in II E 4 is the same as in the self-revelation promise of II A 2. However, II E 4 is not a mere reiteration of events: II A 2 is certainly a "Yahweh speech," while II E 4 deals with Yahweh's actions in confirming a "covenant": *kāraṭ YHWH 'et 'abrām b'riṭ*. The clause beginning with *lê'mor* in 15:18 expresses the meaning of the action² in terms of the promised land about which the covenant was made,³ but the report itself describes a

¹Coats, *Gen*, p. 124, claims that the complaint is more specific in vs. 3. However, we are too unsure about the precise content of vs. 2 to risk proclaiming one more specific than the other.

²Though intention, rather than actual speech, is sometimes expressed with *lê'mor* in Biblical Hebrew (e.g., 1 Kgs 1:5, Am 8:5), there is no obstacle to the actual pronunciation of those words during the covenant ceremony.

³The fact that a *b'riṭ* is made "about" certain issues ("words") can be ascertained from expressions such as *ʿal kol haddēbārīm hā'ēlleh* (Exod 24:8), or *ʿal pī*

deed (*kārat* . . . *b'rit*) and not a speech alone. We should not overlook the fact that this is the first report of a *b'rit* with Abraham in the narratives. This underlines the relief of the action as such.

This is not, however, a deed of Yahweh in isolation but an interactive enterprise: '*et 'abrām*. The conclusion of dialogue I ends with a change of status for Abraham (who is, traditionally, the one credited with "righteousness"), and vss. 18-21 at the end of this dialogue imply the same, for Abraham is now for the first time a covenant-partner, a confirmed vassal of the Lord.¹ In this interactive conclusion, then, we have an insufficiently recognized parallel.

Its importance can be gauged through a peculiar structural feature, which approximates an *inclusio* in each unit. In 7b *hōšē'tikā* refers to the present situation of Abraham in Palestine, outside the realm of Mesopotamian cities (*mē'ūr kašdim*). In 18b the limits are given as starting in Palestine (*minn^ehar mišrayim*) and ending in Mesopotamia again (*'ad hannāhār* . . . *p^erāt*). Thus the concern of both 7b and 18b is the giving of *hā'āreš hazzot*, "this land," an expression reiterated in both verses and

hadd^ebarim hā'ēlleh (Exod 34:27).

¹See M. Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," Journal of the American Oriental Society 90 (1970): 184-203. More on this below.

defined by contrast to Mesopotamia and by identification with Palestine.

An analogous situation obtains in the first unit. In vs. 1 the concern with trust is expressed by the injunction not to fear as well as by the promise of protection and reward; trust is explicit in 6a. Similarly, the concern with the person of Yahweh appears in 1 through the 'ânokî self-predication, and in 6b by the bYHWH verbal complement. Thus the concern of both 15:1 and 15:6 is trust in the person of Yahweh, and the reiteration of concerns at the beginning and end of this unit is analogous to the situation in the second one.

Since an *inclusio* stresses the importance of its reiterated content as opposed to the material it spans,¹ the *inclusio*-like character of this parallel confirms the importance of acknowledging the concluding interaction for an event, not a mere "conclusion."

A proposal for a four-fold division

Taking these observations into account, one can construct a structural diagram for both parts of Gen 15 based on a fourfold division, as presently illustrated:

¹Stuart, OT Exegesis, p. 32.

S e c t i o n . . . Isaac is
that . . . annulled
their . . .

And see that he was
not destroyed by the
blessed Son of R.
Johanan, I be He,
I lifted him up to the
sky and showed
prophecy. I have
prophecy abroad,
(Ch. xv,

Praep.atio
Die
Euseb
1982] op.
divulgo of

1-6	PROMISE DIALOGUE	7-21
1	A. <u>Promissory Oracle</u>	7
1a-b	1. Speech formula	7a
1c	2. Self-predication of Yahweh	7b
1d	3. Promise	7c
2-3	B. <u>Inquiry about Promise</u>	8
2a	1. Invocation '*donây YHWH	8a
2b-3	2. Request for surety	8b
4-5	C. <u>Divine Response</u>	9-16
4a	1. Speech formula	9a
4b-5	2. Illustrated specifications about the promise	9b-16
6	D. <u>Concluding Interaction</u>	17-21
	(Acceptance of promise and elevation to a new status)	

A four-fold structural division was also discerned by W. Brueggemann in the "movement of verses 1-6."¹ He delineates it in the following way:

1	Yahweh's fundamental promise
2-3	Abraham's protest
4-5	Yahweh's response
6	Abraham's acceptance

One can see that the division and the dialogical understanding of the passage is the same, even though I would prefer a term other than "protest" for Abraham's

¹W. Brueggemann, Genesis (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), p. 140.

inquiry and a description of vs. 6 that includes God's activity as well as Abraham's. From previous authors I have preserved above the determination of these units as "promise dialogues."¹ The dialogic nature of the unit is reflected in the the organizing principle:² the alternation of the subjects in their interventions in speech, which lead to an interactive climax.

Thus a promise of God (A) is followed by a reaction of Abraham (B) in search of surety, which is satisfied by God (C) with further predictions. The promise is then consolidated in a concluding interaction between God and Abraham (D), with implications for their future relationship. The sequence of interventions, in speech and related action, reported in each dialogue could thus be condensed as promise--query--clarification--acceptance.³

This analysis can be supported by the repeated

¹This does not imply concurrence with the judgment (Lohfink, Landverheissung, p. 79) that "Gn 15 ist eine Zusammenstellung verschiedener Traditionen über Verheissungen an Abraham." See also Coats, Genesis, p. 125.

²A clear definition of the form provides a starting point to determine the compositional principle along the lines of literary analysis. See Beauchamp, "Autour du 1er ch. de la Gen.," p. 63.

³This formal correspondence between the dialogues coexists, of course, with many differences in content and detail. Thus, e.g., in the first self-predication, Yahweh refers to himself as 'ânôki, and describes Himself as a Protector and Rewarder, while in the second he employs the pronoun 'nî, and describes Himself as a providential Leader. None of these differences contradicts the structural relationship.

occurrence of "framing formulae"¹ in the text itself. All verbal statements of these dialogues are introduced by means of forms of the verb 'mr, occurring five times in each unit. Thus we have:

15:1 (lê'mor)	15:7 (wayyo'mer)
15:2 (wayyo'mer)	15:8 (wayyo'mar)
15:3 (wayyo'mer)	15:9 (wayyo'mer)
15:4 (lê'mor)	15:13 (wayyo'mer)
15:5 (wayyo'mer)	15:18 (lê'mor)

These introductions to the five verbal statements in each unit remark their dialogical nature. That they are five, instead of the three minimally required by a dialogue with two shifts of speaker,² is due to the fact that more than one statement is sometimes pronounced by the same subject before the interlocutor intervenes again. In our unit, two statements of Abraham in his query (15:2,3) are balanced by two from God (15:4,5) in his clarifying answer. Such introductory formulae should not be confused, therefore, with the alternating interventions or shifts in speaking subjects. They do constitute valuable indicators of the nature of the unit.

In each unit, when God resumes speaking after Abraham's intervention, the introductory formula is the

¹See Beauchamp, "Autour du 1er ch. de la Gen.," p. 60.

²There are only two shifts in each unit: from God (15:1,7) to Abraham (15:2,8) and back to God again (15:4,9), who has the last word.

same as in his first statement, incorporating words that are used only in association with such opening divine statements and not when additional statements are made by the same Subject or his interlocutor.

Thus the divine speech-formulae (A., C.) are uniformly associated with d*bar--YHWH for both interventions of the first unit (15:1,4). They occur as wayyo'mer 'êlâyw for the opening statements of both divine interventions in the second unit (15:7,9). These phrases do not occur anywhere else in the units.

This uniformity in framing formulae is significant. The elaborated d*bar--YHWH speech formula at the beginning of 15:4, so close to 15:1, strikes the reader as unnecessary and awkward until its structuring significance is realized. Such stylistic redundancy is not merely a modern prejudice. In fact, ancient documents (Jubilees, 1Qap Gen or the literary ancestry from which they depend) did judge the formula to be unnecessary and deleted it, as noted before. Thus, this uniformity rigidly adhered to when the formulae could be obviated and in the face of an apparent need for stylistic variation argues for the organizing force of these expressions, thereby confirming our structural analysis of the unit.

The unity of Gen 15

The unity of composition as a problem of source criticism lies outside the field of concern of the present

investigation. The distribution of the text among several sources hinges on the presence of several "discrepancies,"¹ here briefly reviewed.

The one most often quoted is the contrast between the implied time of the day at the points alluded by vss. 5 (stars were visible) and 12 (before sunset). Presupposing that all the reported events refer to the same occasion in Abraham's life,² and taking into account that the events told in the latter verse came obviously later than those of the former, many interpreters take the narrative as a composite combined by an ancient scribe who "did not take into consideration the discrepancy thereby created."³

One wonders, however, whether modern interpreters have given due weight in consideration to the time necessary for the processes described in vss. 9, 10.⁴ An

¹For the common opinion on this subject, see "Introduction."

²Which may be questioned, as in P. Volz and W. Rudolph, Der Elohist als Erzähler: ein Irrweg der Pentateuchkritik?, (Giessen, Töpelmann, 1933), pp. 27, 28.

³Anbar, "Gen 15," pp. 54, 55.

⁴Even for everyday butchering, splitting large animals lengthwise was a time-consuming, though necessary, operation. For the ceremonial employment of the flesh that is portrayed in the chapter, additional constraints of neatness are likely. Time-consuming, too, are the prerequisite operations of obtaining the animals from various herds, leading them to the slaughter-place, bleeding them to death, flaying, beheading and eviscerating the carcasses, and disposing of the entrails. Even with servant help for peripheral tasks, Abraham can reasonably be expected to have spent a large part of a workday in those operations.

"ancient scribe" probably could not have found a discrepancy there even if alerted: he would quite naturally assume that Abraham was shown the stars and given instructions about the animals one night, carried the orders out the next day, and experienced the *tardemâh* revelation towards the evening.¹ So understood, the narrative would in some respects parallel that of the Akedah (Gen 22),² which argues for the plausibility of such understanding.

Less common is the perception of another "contradiction" at vss. 6 and 8.³ Its validity seems even more

¹So is the text also understood even today by several scholars. See, e.g., Derek Kidner, Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary, Tyndale OT Commentaries, (Chicago: Tyndale, 1967), pp. 123-4, and J. G. Baldwin, The Message of Genesis 12-50: From Abraham to Joseph (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), p. 50. Wenham, Genesis, ad loc., cogently argues that "the structure of the second scene [Gen 15:7-21] mirrors that of the first [15:1-6] too closely for them to be regarded as independent" and admits the possibility that "vv 7-21 take place the day following 1-6."

²I.e., a vision with instructions given presumably at night (vss. 1-2), preparatives for compliance starting early next morning (vs. 3), and continuing for a long time (vss. 4-10), after which divine revelation is resumed (vss. 11ff).

³Some authors point out that, at vs. 6, Abraham appears as a man of uncommon faith, but at vs. 8 some doubts must underlie his request for a miraculous confirmation of the promise. In recent times the point has been made again by G. von Rad, Das erste Buch Mose, Das Alte Testament Deutsch, vol. 3 (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht), pp. 153-4.

questionable.¹ There is, then, no undisputable "discrepancy" in this chapter.² Therefore, the charge of proof for the multiple source attribution remains with its propounders.

No matter what the correct history of composition may be, a more important question for our purposes is whether the narrative, in its received state, has successfully achieved a high degree of redactional unity among its several pericopes--i.e., whether they read as a unitary composition. We have previously discussed the connections between our passage and the foregoing narratives in Genesis. Now the question arises whether Gen 15:1-6 is also to be closely connected with 15:7-21.

¹People of OT times may not have interpreted such a request as evidence of wavering faith; rather the opposite might have been the case (see Isa 7:11ff, Judg 6:36-40). Besides, the promise connected by the text with the statement that he "believed God" is not identical with the one he requested confirmation about. Even if some strain appears in his acceptance of the latter, there is no psychological contradiction with his readiness to receive the former. After all, one concerned individual and family affairs, while the other implied a future national territory, which is psychologically much more remote.

²A third "inconsistence" is the self-predication of Yahweh in vs. 7, though Abram had already recognized him as such in vs. 2. But in the OT "I am YHWH, who. . ." hardly implies that the addressees are described as in need of such self-introduction to recognize Him (see, e.g., Lev 25:38, Num 15:41, etc.). Gen 15:7 could even be translated: "I, YHWH, am the one who brought you out . . ." as if opening the eyes of Abram, who thought he had merely followed Terah's own initiative when going out of Ur (Gen 11:30), to His providence in that matter.

As just seen, the regular structural correspondences of Gen 15:1-6 with 7-21 constitute a firm link with the latter passage. But this is by no means the only possible kind of connection.

H. Cazelles, in his article "Connexions et Structure de Gen. XV,"¹ recognizes that the studies of Snijders, Hoftijzer and O. Kaiser, in one way or another, manifest the unity of Gen 15 in the present form of the text.²

Indeed, Hoftijzer refused to acknowledge the division of the chapter in two pericopes at all, showing that 15:6 demands a sequel,³ a need satisfied by 15:7-21. Even if that refusal is deemed extreme, his stress on the chapter unity remains valid, and we must explore the matter further from the perspective of elements common to both units.

The structure of Gen 15:1-6 and covenant elements

The outstanding feature of Gen 15:7-21 is the "covenant" (b^crit) between God and Abraham. Though the

¹RB 69: 321 ff.

²He, however, prefers to see the two traditional sources, J and E, underlying this unity. The works discussed are: L. A. Snijders, "Genesis XV. The Covenant with Abram," in B. Gemser, ed. Studies on the Book of Genesis, Oudtestamentische Studiën (Leiden: Brill, 1958), pp. 261-79; Hoftijzer, Verheissungen, pp. 17-23, 53 ff.; O. Kaiser, ZAW 70: 107-25.

³Verheissungen, p. 19.

exact nature of the ceremony in this passage is disputed,¹ and so is the antiquity of covenant conceptions in the religious history of Israel,² there are no good reasons to modify the traditional translation of b^erit̃ as "covenant" in the passage.³ Van Seters alludes to its covenantal character in saying that the vss. 18-21 are "in the form of a divine grant of land."⁴

Since, on the other hand, we have seen that both pericopes are closely linked in their structural pattern, we must ask what possible influences, if any, ancient covenant forms had on the structure of 1-6.

Clements is probably right in judging that "at no point [in Gen 15:1-6] is the promise said to have been

¹G. Hasel has inventoried the scholarly works that conceive the ceremony as swearing, oath, self-curse, or otherwise self-imprecating, and argued that the animal rite had no such self-imprecatory nature. See "The Meaning of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 19 (1981): 61-78.

²For a detailed chronological treatment of the historiographical reconstructions of these conceptions, see E. W. Nicholson, God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), pp. 3-120. He shows how the controversy ended with most scholars accepting at least "a nucleus of historicity" for OT covenant passages.

³Nicholson, God & His People, pp. 104ff. See also Rogers, BSac 127: 241-56; and O. Palmer Robertson, "Genesis 15:6: New Covenant Expositions of an Old Covenant Text," Westminster Theological Journal 42 (1979-80): 259-89. For the importance of this b^erit̃ passage for OT studies, see Lohfink, Landverheissung, 11-23 and 114.

⁴Abr. in Hist., p. 259. For the covenantal significance of the term "grant," see below.

rooted in a covenant agreement, and no covenant ceremony is described."¹ This, however, does not preclude the presence of covenantal elements in the structure of the passage.

In his classical discussion of covenantal forms in the ancient world, Mendenhall recognizes: (a) a preamble, with a speech formula and an identification of the suzerain who grants the covenant; (b) an historical prologue; (c) a series of stipulations, often including "an exhortation to trust the suzerain;" (d) a provision for deposit and public reading; (e) a list of witnesses; and (f) a series of blessings and curses.²

In our passage there are possible indications of the presence of most of these structural parts. Only (d) and (e) are clearly absent. For the speech formula (usually "these are the words of . . ."), we have a well-developed d^ebar-YHWH statement, followed immediately by the requisite identification of the Suzerain. Rogers has recognized that in Gen 15:1 the "I am thy shield" clause identifies "the divine Partner" in the characteristic way of a "component part" of the "covenant form."³ In the nature of the case,

¹Clements, Abraham and David, p. 19.

²"Covenant," in IDB 1: 714f.

³Rogers, BSac 127: 250-1. This author sees a covenant even in the previous promises of Gen 12:1ff. T. E. McComiskey cautions "that there is no clear evidence that the writer intended us to understand that a covenantal relationship existed before Genesis 15," Covenants of Promise, p. 60.

this takes the form of a self-revelation of Yahweh. Though there is no formal historical preamble as such, the terminological and formulaic connections of our passage with previous favors of God, including the recent victory over the four kings,¹ functions to the same effect.²

No stipulations about the behavior of the vassal are evident here, as indeed in the Abrahamic covenant as a whole.³ However, G. M. Kline has argued that the "total allegiance," found in all the Abrahamic covenant passages,⁴ "was precisely that fealty which the treaty stipulations were designed to secure."⁵

In any case God undeniably binds Himself here to provide protection and reward.⁶ While protection is one of the high marks of any suzerain treaty, as presently shown,

¹See Caquot, Sem 12: 64; Coats, Genesis, p. 123, and our own observations below on 'hry hdbrym h'lh.

²Cf. Rogers, BSac 127: 251-2. It does not, however, follow after (a), but it is combined with it in a single expression.

³See Rogers, BSac 127: 252, n. 56, for a list of authorities on this point; cf. also Clements, Abr. & David, pp. 86ff.

⁴In The Treaty of the Great King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 23, he quotes Gen 12:1 and 17:1, only; however, see also idem, "Abram's Amen," Westminster Theological Journal 31 (1938-9): 1-11, esp. p. 9.

⁵Treaty, p. 23.

⁶Gen 15:1-6 is actually the model for this type of covenants in which God is bound. See Mendenhall, IDB 1: 716-8. For the application to Gen 15:1-6, cf. Rogers, BSac 127: 253ff.

this unilateral binding of the suzerain is typical of the "grant" type of covenants.¹ The request of clarification about the reward promise (15:2-3) leads to further specifications about the obligation assumed by God. The admonition not to fear, followed by the self-revelation of God as Protector, clearly has the character of an invitation to trust in Him (integral to the stipulations of ancient suzerainty treaties), which Abraham accepts (15:6).

We do not find a series of blessings and curses, witnesses or provisions for rereading. However, none of them can be expected either, for the covenant ceremony itself has not yet taken place. Interestingly, the same elements are lacking from the Sinaitic covenant in Exodus, as pointed out by Mendenhall, McCarthy, and Gerstenberg, among others.²

Also, as just seen, those elements that are somehow present assume in some cases embryonic or elliptical forms. A full and complete covenantal structure is not to be expected, however, since most of the chapter is

¹Weinfeld, JAOS 90: 184-203.

²G. E. Mendenhall, Law and Covenant in Israel and the Ancient Near East, (Pittsburgh: Bibl. Colloquium, 1955), pp. 39-41. E. Gerstenberg, review of McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, published in Journal of Biblical Literature 83 (1964): 198-9, has shown that this is indeed a general problem: "The OT . . . does not contain drafts of treaties, but at best narratives and sermons about covenants."

presented, not as a report of the covenant itself, but only of the situation from which it arose.¹

Pre-covenantal dialogues

We have previously indicated that the flow of thought in the pericopes can be condensed in the sequence promise--query--clarification--acceptance. Other instances of dialogue with the same formal sequence can be found in the Pentateuch and historical books of Scripture also associated with covenant reports. They are presently summarized for comparison.

In Gen 21:22-32 we have the report of the b^erit_i concluded between Abraham and Abimelech at Beersheba. The king, flanked by his commander Phicol, invites Abraham to enter into a stable relationship with him and his descendants, stating its essential characteristics (21:22-23). While showing his willingness to comply (21:24), Abraham raises a difficulty: the illegal seizure of a well of water (21:25). Abimelech clarifies his behaviour in this matter (21:26). Thereupon the b^erit_i is consummated in the course of an animal rite (27-32).

Josh 9:1-15 contains the report of the wily manoeuvres of the Gibeonites when obtaining a b^erit_i with Israel. This is requested under false pretenses (9:6). Both the elders of Israel and Joshua then raise up the

¹Mendenhall, IDB 1: 717.

question of geographical placement (9:7-8). Nice-sounding words and contrived evidence satisfy the Israelites (9:9-13), who then conclude the covenant with the intervention of a meal (9:14-15).

A clear pattern, with the same fourfold division invitation--query--satisfaction--acceptance, emerges from the comparison, as summed up in this table:

<u>Invitation to relationship</u>	<u>Query by the other party</u>	<u>Satisfaction of the query</u>	<u>Acceptance & interact.</u>
Gen 15:1	15:2-3	15:4-5	15:6
Gen 15:7	15:8	15:9-16	15:17-21
Gen 21:22-23	21:24-25	21:26	21:27-32
Josh 9:6	9:7-8	9:9-13	9:14-15

Other slightly less complete¹ examples of pre-covenantal dialogues can be found in Exod 34:8-27 and 2 Sam 3:12-16. The references for the same sequence are as follows:

Exod 34:8-9	34:10-27	34:28-32	(implied)
2 Sam 3:12	3:13	3:15-16	(implied)

Of course, not all covenant reports follow this sequence. In one instance the "preliminaries" included outrageous conditions, bound to be rejected, and so the *b^erit* was never consummated (1 Sam 11:1-3). In other cases only the invitation and its acceptance are reported (2 Sam

¹Though using the word *b^erit* in the invitation to the relationship, they do not explicitly state that this was concluded. However, they they do imply it: Exod 34 refers to the renewal of the *b^erit* relationship after the mishap of the golden calf, and 2 Sam 3:13 taken together with 3:20 indicate that the *b^erit* of David with Abner was actually consummated.

5:1-3, 1 Kgs 15:11-20; 20:31-34). Overall, however, the narratives make clear that preliminaries such as those in which the parties discuss the aims, feasibility and preconditions for the relationship, and where some obligations begin to crystallize, were a normal and almost expected part of a covenant report.

Since both parallel dialogues of Gen 15 exhibit covenantal elements, and the second explicitly climaxes in a *b'rit*, both can now be understood as covenant preliminaries. We could subcategorize these units, then, as "pre-covenantal dialogues."

We have already seen that the covenant is the center of the Abraham narratives. In closely connecting this unit to the covenant in the next, the importance of the former within those narratives is underlined. One should then look for confirmatory evidence.

Other evidence for a covenantal character

Structural conformation is not the only line of evidence that can be invoked to establish the pre-covenantal nature of the passage. Other formal criteria, defined as early as 1932, imply as much. A. Poebel showed that on the basis of both the OT and W. Semitic inscriptions, self-predications of the type of Gen 15:7 correspond formally to the style of an oral document of enfeoffment,

i.e., of vassal investiture.¹ Though the self-predication in Gen 15:1 differs from the type studied by Poebel,² there is enough similarity to argue that the documentary style is continuous in both self-predications,³ hence also the enfeoffment implications.

Terminological criteria also have their say. M. Dahood has called attention to the fact that in Ps 84:10 *mgn* parallels *māšiah*, and in Ps 89:19 it balances *melek*. Thus, whatever one may think of his derivation of the concept of "Suzerain" from the root *mgn* (not *gmn*) for this word, it is difficult to deny that *mgn* is indeed associated with overlords, and thus with covenantal terminology.⁴ Modern versions have recognized this equation *mgn* = "suzerain" in Ps 47:9.⁵

Calderone makes similar points: *mgn* signifies "kings in general ([Ps] 84:10; 47:10)" but belongs "to a root meaning 'protect'." As such, it "appropriately

¹See Das appositionell bestimmte Pronomen der 1 Pers. Sing. in den Westsemitischen Inschriften und im A.T., Assyriol. Studies 3 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1932), pp. 70-2.

²In the latter, the "I" is followed by a participle. On the possibility of reading *mgn* as a Qal participle of the verbal root *mgn*, see the linguistic analysis below.

³Cf. Rogers, BSac 127: 251.

⁴M. Dahood, Psalms, 2 vols., Anchor Bible 16 (New York: Doubleday, 1966-68) 16(1): 16f.; 17(2): 282-3, 316.

⁵See NIV, NEB.

highlights the essence of the suzerain's relationship towards the vassal."¹ We have here, then, a terminological argument for the pre-covenantal nature of Gen 15:1.

G. M. Kline believes he has found similar facts in regards to 15:6. He reminds us that he'°min can be connected with the 'mn that appears "in the records of both biblical and extra-biblical covenants."² And his appeal to Deut 27:15-26,³ at the very least, seems valid to establish a terminological association. Whether expressed through an audible "amen" or not,⁴ Abraham's acceptance of God's oracle in Gen 15:6 certainly parallels the people's acceptance of the covenant blessings and curses in Deuteronomy.

A whole array of criteria, then, combine to strengthen our inscription of the unit in a "pre-covenantal dialogue" subcategory. Of course, we also have to deal with difficulties.

¹p. J. Calderone, Dynastic Oracle and Suzerainty Treaty (Manila: Ateneo University, 1966), p. 70.

²WTJ 31: 3. Though criticized for his presuppositions, Kline has been at the same time recommended for the factual content of his work. Review of The Treaty of the Great King, by W. A. Brueggemann, Theology and Life 7 (1964): 247-8.

³Treaty, p. 29.

⁴See O. Palmer Robertson, "Gen 15:6: New Covenant Expositions of an Old Covenant Text" in Westminster Theological Journal 42 (1979-80): 263-4.

A Difficulty Addressed:
The Absence of b^erit

We presently address a difficulty mentioned above:¹ if the passage is pre-covenantal, why do we not find an explicit reference to a b^erit in Gen 15:1-6? Several factors can be invoked:

1. The provision of protection and reward is in itself definitory of the suzerain relationship,² at all times and places,³ but especially in the Ancient Near East:

Hittite suzerainty was essentially a relationship of mutual protection. . . . The sovereign's general promises to protect the vassal are often closely linked to the vassal's fundamental stipulation of loyalty.⁴

Among those "general promises" one finds "the Great King's guarantee of his subject's land and borders" as exemplified in the treaty of Suppiluliuma with Niqmadu:

Extending the northern boundaries of Ugarit as a reward for loyal military support, the sovereign

¹Clements makes this point in Abraham and David, p. 19.

²See Calderone, Oracle and Suzerainty, p. 70.

³The definition of "vassal" in The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1984) X: 366, is "one invested with a fief in return for services to an overlord . . . the lord had the duty to provide the fief for his vassal, to protect him, and to do him justice in his court." This is valid not only for medieval Europe, (cf. idem, Macropaedia 12: 151) but also for Far Eastern society until recent times (ibid., 6: 123), and a fortiori, for the ancient Near East (the "suzerain treaties" recovered by archaeologists in the Near East have been so called because of their correspondence with the European and Far Eastern historical models).

⁴p. J. Calderone, Oracle and Treaty (Manila: Ateneo University, 1966), p. 17.

guarantees its integrity in terms to instill confidence in any vassal.¹

Since a typical covenant guaranteed protection and offered lands as a reward, the occurrence of the terms *mêgên* and *šâkar* in the opening self-revelation of God (15:1) sufficiently indicates the suzerainty concept. This is all the more so in view of the consistent associations of the word *mgn* with overlordship in the Bible, already indicated. Even where the obligation to provide protection is not explicit in a covenant, "it goes without saying."² Conversely, where the offer of protection is explicit, as here, its covenantal nature goes without saying.

2. "It is known from extrabiblical sources that covenants between the head of a family and a particular deity were customary in pre-Mosaic times."³ Thus, the concept would be immediately recognizable to ancient readers even in the absence of the term "covenant."

3. The term "covenant" is so bound up with the ceremony that puts it into effect,⁴ that it is best reserved for the report on the latter that comes later in the chapter.

¹Ibid., p. 20.

²Mendenhall, Law & Covenant, p. 36. See also Calderone, Oracle and Treaty, p. 20.

³Mendenhall, IDB 1:718.

⁴Ibid., 1:714.

This can be illustrated from the Abraham narratives themselves. In the Gen 21:22-34 report of covenant preliminaries, it is not until after the satisfaction of his query that Abraham fetches the requisite animals to conclude the b^erit. The word, in fact, appears for the first time in the narrative at 21:27 in this connection. It should not come as a surprise, then, that in Gen 15 it is found in the same position, reserved for the actual conclusion of the treaty.

Therefore, the lack of mention of a b^erit in 15:1-6 is no major obstacle to the identification of the nature of this promisory dialogue as pre-covenantal. Nor is a covenant ceremony to be expected until preliminaries are brought to a conclusion. We must now turn to the context for confirmation of the pre-covenantal nature of this promisory dialogue.

The pre-covenantal concept
and the preceding context

When understood as covenant preliminaries, the place of this passage in the general context of Abraham narratives turns out to be especially appropriate:

1. Land grants, rulership of cities, etc., were usually bestowed on high-ranking officers of the suzerain, often generals of his army. Now, it has been often noted that in the immediately preceding context Abraham has been

described as a succesful "noble warrior,"¹ and that it is now fitting for him to receive the promised land as a grant from God as his Overlord.²

Gen 21:22-26 has been previously identified as another pre-covenantal dialogue within the Abraham stories. Thus we should now note that the patriarch's recent success appears there also as a motivation for a covenant. Abimelech states: "God is with you in everything you do. Now (w^ecattâh) swear to me here before God. . ." (21:22b-23a).

2. The successful military enterprise of Gen 14 was not undertaken for the sake of conquest or self-defense, but because of family loyalty. He thus demonstrates his fitness for the Lord-vassal bond, in which loyalty to a human relationship modeled after familial patterns is paramount, not only in medieval Europe³ but also, and principally, in the ancient Near East.⁴

3. In the same chapter Abraham has shown his ability to act as an effective underlord protecting the

¹See Y. Muffs, "Abraham the Noble Warrior: Patriarchal Politics and Laws of War in Ancient Israel," Journal of Jewish Studies 33 (1982): 81-107.

²Cazelles, RB 69: 328; Caquot, Sem 12: 57.

³See Britannica, 12: 151 and especially the medieval law code Siete Partidas (Spain, XIII A.D.) in Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1958) s.v. "vasallo."

⁴See Weinfeld, JAOS 90: 194-5. See also Nicholson, God and His People, p. 61.

land and his dependants--a most useful trait in view of the commutative character of the suzerain-vassal relationship.¹

Thus, he can now be safely confirmed in his grant.²

4. Abraham's response to the self-revelation in 15:2 opens with "my Lord Yahweh." This is the first occurrence of 'ādōnāy in Genesis. Though commonplace in the Bible next to the divine name,³ we should read it here with the freshness intended in this "book of beginnings." Therefore we should have in mind a general, non-technical, sense of the term 'ādōn, which is especially appropriate to designate the suzerain in a covenantal bond.⁴

5. Identical invocation prefaces its analogue in 15:8, where the covenantal nature (historical prologue and all) has been firmly established by previous research.

These clues are sufficient to admit a contextual confirmation of the pre-covenantal nature of the passage.

¹"Vassalship, then, was a reciprocal bond, truly commutative." Espasa-Calpe, s.v. "vasallaje."

²Cf. M. Astour, "Political and Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis 14 and Its Babylonian Sources," A. Altmann, ed., Biblical Motifs: Origins and Transformations (Cambridge: University Press, 1966), pp. 65-112, esp. p. 74; see also van Seters, Abr. in Hist., p. 306, for a cautionary consideration.

³According to Eissfeldt, s.v. "'dny," TDOT 1: 62-3, occurs 315 times associated with the Tetragrammaton out of a total of 449 occurrences.

⁴*Ibid.* For this crucial opposition between "lord-vassal" and "lord-servant" relationships, in antiquity reflected in the contrast between ba'al and 'ādōn, see also the medieval situation in Espasa-Calpe, s.v. "vasallaje."

These supplement the structural and terminological study offered above.

The relationship of the unit to its immediately preceding context should also be addressed apart from the identification of a formal subcategory, "pre-covenantal dialogue." But since the preceding discussion necessarily overlaps the structural determination of this relationship, we now take advantage of the light it can throw on the latter issue.

The Unit in Its Context

The structure of the general narrative context, the Abraham stories, has been shown to suggest a loose connection of Gen 15:1-6 with the previous chapters. The structure indicates that the stories are not haphazardly compiled but configure an integrated and harmonious whole. On the other hand, we have shown that even within a block there are breaks in the continuity. This leads, on the one hand, to seriously consider the possibility of a connection with the preceding chapters, and on the other, to avoid making the immediately preceding events reported in Gen 14 *per se* into the determining contextual factor for its interpretation.

In the light of the structural analysis of chap. 15, supported by terminological associations, the true connection emerges as covenantal. All the preceding chapters, not just Gen 14, appear now as the "antecedent

history" background for the ensuing covenant.

Such antecedent history justifies the Lord's call to a covenantal bond which opens our unit. We have seen that in ancient Near East covenants the suzerain justifies his position vis-a-vis his vassal in terms of past favors. Here, the divine guidance in the life of Abraham, which climaxes in his recent victory, shows that the suzerainty of the Lord in Abraham's life is abundantly justified.

On the other hand, the preceding context also justifies the Lord's choice of vassal. We just saw how the context, in representing Abraham as a nobly motivated and highly effective patriarchal protector, tends to justify this choice in view of the underlord capabilities of the patriarch.

Thus, the unit is related to the whole of foregoing stories through the themes of divine guidance in Abraham's life, especially manifested in the immediately preceding chapter. An account of such divine favors, and of their adequate human response, was expected when reporting the invitation to a covenant with the Deity. Therefore, the narrative, in passing over to pre-covenantal dialogues, unfolds smoothly.

Our unit reports the opening preliminaries of that momentous covenant so as to stress its essential promises (protection and covenantal grants), the role assigned in it to Abraham's offspring, i.e., the target audience of the

report, and the grounds for God's acceptance of Abraham. Since the content of the report is such a central event in the life of Abraham, and since reports of even secular and minor covenants contain a description of preliminaries, the covenant narrative would remain inexplicably incomplete in the absence of our unit.

The main concerns in our unit are not difficult to ascertain because the text itself emphasizes certain ideas by repetition. We have seen that vss. 1 and 6 determine a quasi-inclusio centered on the idea of trusting in Yahweh:

"Do not be afraid, Abram: I am your Protector."	So Abram put his trust in Yahweh.
--	--------------------------------------

as well as in its consequences:

"Your reward will be very great."	He considered that as uprightness on his part.
--------------------------------------	--

The rest of the unit shows an antithetical content parallelism for the most part, around the ideas of the successors' provenance (vss. 2, 4) and numerical strength (vss. 3, 5):¹

But Abram said: "My Lord Yahweh ...	And then the word of Yahweh came to him in these terms:
--	---

the chief dependent in my household is	"No such one will succeed you, but it is
---	---

¹A few transitions and circumstantial introductions have been omitted as presently indicated (...).

the Damascus citizen
Eliezer"

one coming from your
own body who will succeed
you ..."

And Abram said:

Then He told him:

"See, you have given
me no offspring ...

"So shall your offspring
be."

The repetition of ideas, therefore, suggests that the main concerns of the unit are: (1) Trust in Yahweh and (2) its consequences in the framework of the covenantal relationship, plus (3) its prolongation in an offspring of appropriate qualities.

Summary

The general structure of the Abraham stories shows that our unit is close to their covenantal heart. Though other formal categories have been proposed for our unit, that of pre-covenantal dialogue fits the particular structure of Gen 15 best.

This concept can be variously confirmed. The terminology employed agrees with the proposed identification. The absence of the term "covenant" is no major obstacle to this determination. Other instances of pre-covenantal dialogues can be found in the Pentateuch and historical books of the Old Testament with the same structural sequence. Also, the categorization of the promise dialogues as pre-covenantal fits the foregoing and ensuing context adequately.

In this light, the connection of the preceding

Abraham stories with our unit emerges as that of an "antecedent history" with its respective covenant and is, therefore, harmoniously integrated. Our unit, in turn, provides an expected account of preliminaries stressing the essential promises of the covenant, the role of offspring and grounds for God's acceptance of Abraham as a vassal.

For this task of structural determination no particular translation of the text was found to be indispensable, and the consensus of the common understanding of the narratives was relied upon. Before proceeding in the exegesis, however, it is indispensable to precise the content of the unit by an examination of its individual words and phrases. This takes us to grammar and syntax before returning to the theological ideas of the passage for further elucidation.

Lexical and Grammatical Analysis of Gen 15:1-6

In this section the main translational options deriving from grammatical and lexical difficulties are reviewed in order to adopt one for the remaining discussion. Though I try to cover as far as possible the alternatives cited in the current exegetical literature, I concentrate on certain points. The special importance of these points arises from the previous contextual and structural study and is explained at the beginning of each section.

Promissory Oracle

'aḥar hadd²bārim hā'ēlleh

This expression poses the question of the relationship of the unit with the previous context from a linguistic viewpoint. An ancient debate, recorded, e.g., in Gen. R. 44:5: 1A-C,¹ is still reflected in modern versions. Speiser interpretatively translates this phrase as "After some time."² This could suggest that the narrative, after the events reported in Gen 14, jumps over less interesting aspects of Abraham's life into a new, not directly related, vista.

On the other hand, the Berkeley Version renders the same sentence "Following these events," an expression that favors some kind of connection.³ "After this" (NEB) or even the literal "after these things" (KJV) also lean in this direction.

Among commentators, a minority opinion sees an explicit connection through this phrase.⁴ The suggestion

¹As seen in the previous chapter, R. Yudan thought that the expression implies that "there is no connection" with the preceding events, and the STg inserts "in its due time" to dispel the impression of an immediate connection. On the other hand, R. Huna thought that it means "forthwith and in consequence," and the PTg stressed the victorious circumstances of Abraham.

²Speiser, Genesis, Anchor Bible, ad loc.

³G. Verkuyl, ed., The Berkeley Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959).

⁴"Abram's fine renunciation in 14:20b-24 makes the promise of [15:1] very apt." Kidner, Genesis, p. 122.

has been advanced that it points to Abraham's renunciation of booty as meaning that "the patriarch looks to God alone as the source of his prosperity" and "does not want anyone to claim that through human agencies he became rich."¹ As already indicated, some authors see a connection, though not in the formula itself.²

But this is actually our problem here. We have already dealt with the issue of connections between the passage and the preceding chapters from a contextual and structural viewpoint. Our concern at this point is the linguistic question whether the phrase, by itself, indicates the connection. A negative or uncertain answer does not preclude the connection indicated by structure or means other than the phrase under consideration. On the other hand, a positive answer would confirm the connection already found.

The procedure to be followed here is a study of the occurrences of the phrase and their immediate contexts, to discover the general sense of the phrase in the Hebrew Biblical idiom. In each occurrence I try to determine if a causal relationship, or another kind of intimate

¹McGonigal, "Abraham Believed God," p. 51. Such would be a rather ascetic or mystical conception for Abraham in Genesis. McGonigal is not, however, committed personally to this interpretation.

²As, e.g., Coats (following Lohfink) and Caquot. See previous section on the "Arrangement of the Abraham stories."

relationship, with the immediate preceding context is warranted.

There is always some subjectivity involved in the determination of connections between reported events.¹ Also, linguistic homogeneity between diverse parts of the Bible cannot be assumed. Idioms may have modified their sense and lost fine distinctions over the period attested through their canonical instances. Therefore, the results of this study must be seen as complementary to other studies (as, e.g., on context) and applied cautiously.

The phrase under consideration appears at Gen 15:1, 22:1, 39:7, 40:1; 1 Kgs 17:17, 22:1; Ezra 7:1; Esth 2:1, 3:1; the similar phrases 'aḥ^arêy hadd^abârim hâ'êlleh at Gen 22:20, 48:1; Josh 24:29; 2 Chr 32:1; and 'aḥar haddâbâr hazzeh at 1 Kgs 13:33.²

In contrast with ancient works,³ modern dictionaries make no clear distinction between the general sense of the singular 'aḥar and that of the plural 'aḥ^arêy;⁴

¹This is specially true when one has to compare an entire block of events with another block of events. It is possible to find connections between particular portions of those blocks, even when not intended by the Biblical author.

²A. Even-Shoshan, A New Concordance of the Bible (Jerusalem: Kiriat-Sepher, 1982), pp. 39, 41.

³See in former chapter the section on Gen. R. This distinction was still mentioned in the Middle Ages by Rashi (Miqra'ot G^edolot, ad loc.).

⁴Thus Holladay, Lexicon, cites "behind, after" and related expressions as senses for both forms of the term.

neither can one *prima facie* distinguish between "events" in plural and a single event.¹ This forces us to consider all forms of 'ḥr/-y hdbṛ/-ym hzh/h'lh.²

The first two references have similar contents in one respect: the phrase prefaces divine revelation to Abraham. They are left aside for the moment as the unknown quantity to be solved in this query.

Causal connections between events reported at either side of 'aḥar hadd*bârim hâ'êlleh are arguable in several cases. Instances are Gen 39:7,³ 40:1,⁴ 1 Kgs

¹The same episode can be described comprehensively as one event or be conceived of as a succession of component events.

²Anbar, *JBL* 101: 40, includes the precise form of the copulative verb *wyhy*, or its absence, in the study of the phrase. In this way he is able to claim that the phrase is unique for the Pentateuch. However, he is dealing with the phrase as a narrative formula, while I approach it as an idiom. For the latter purpose, it does not seem likely that the particular form of *hyh* employed with it, if any, is relevant.

³The formula introduces the attempted seduction of Joseph by the wife of Potiphar; the immediate preceding context is the promotion of Joseph to stewardship over the household of Potiphar. A causal relationship between these events is likely, since the promotion of Joseph must have been instrumental in bringing him to the woman's attention and/or providing increased opportunities for her projected adultery. Coats, *Genesis*, p. 123, recognizes that 'ḥr hdbrym h'lh links in Gen 39:7 and 40:1 "two closely related units."

⁴The formula prefaces the dream-interpretations of Joseph, and the immediate preceding context narrates the promotion of Joseph to a position of responsibility within the prison. Again, the causal connection is obtainable, since it was his position that enabled Joseph to contact the dreamers (40:4).

17:17,¹ Ezra 7:1,² and Esth 2:1.³ In 1 Kgs 21:1 the causal connection through the previously reported mood of the king is at least likely,⁴ and in Esth 3:1 an intimate connection is also discernable.⁵

As for the similar phrase with 'aḥ^arêy (plural) instead of 'aḥar, 2 Chr 32:1 makes a causal relationship

¹The formula introduces the resurrection of the Zarephath widow's son, and the immediate preceding context narrates the kind and obliging attitude of the widow which led to the miracles performed in her behalf. The connection is obvious.

²The formula introduces the "going up" of that famous scribe to Jerusalem with special powers, and the preceding chapter narrates the secure establishment of Temple worship in that city. The civil organization that ensued was obviously necessary to the welfare of the fledgling cultic community. Thus a causal connection also obtains: because of the events of Ezra 6, then those of Ezra 7.

³The context preceding Esth 2:1 recounts the expulsion of Vashti, and the phrase introduces the nationwide search for virgins to replace her. It is difficult to deny a causal connection here.

⁴The formula introduces the tyrannical seizure of Naboth's vineyard by Ahab, and the preceding verse has him returning to his capital "sullen and angry." The connection is recognized, e.g., by C. Allen, ed., The Broadman Bible Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1970), ad loc.

⁵The phrase introduces the promotion of Haman, causing special honors to be bestowed on him though he is rebuffed by Mordecai. The preceding context explains the presence and activities of Mordecai at the "king's gate" (2:21) where honors were later to be bestowed on Haman (3:2). This presence of the Jew at the locale sets up the confrontation with Haman. Thus there is also an intimate connection between events at either side of the phrase under consideration.

explicit.¹ More often there is no such implication, but still an intimate connection between events reported at either side of the formula. This may be seen in Gen 22:20,² Gen 48:1,³ and Josh 24:29.⁴

¹The precedent context deals with the reforms of Hezekiah. The verse reads: "After these events ['ah^arêy hadd^ebârim . . . hâ'êlleh] and this example of loyal conduct. . ." in The New English Bible (Oxford and Cambridge: University Presses, 1970). The sequel is the miraculous deliverance from Senacherib's invasion. Clearly, the phrases "after these events" and "after this example of loyal conduct," joined by the conjunction, were meant in the same sense: the loyalty towards Yahweh shown in the reforms would soon to be rewarded.

²The immediate preceding context is the Lord's oath confirming the promise of blessed descendance through Isaac. The phrase introduces the arrival of notice about relatives "also" establishing families (22:20); this information in Abraham's power later allows him to obtain a worthy wife for Isaac and thus secure the blessed descendance. The text intimates (22:23) that this is indeed the purpose for recording the arrival of this news. No causal connection is discoverable here, since it may be assumed that the report about the offspring of relatives would have reached Abraham in any case, but the information is directly relevant to the immediate preceding context.

³The phrase is preceded by the oath of Joseph about the burial of Jacob; the phrase introduces news reaching Joseph about the last illness of Jacob. Again, we can assume that this event would have taken place in any case without the previous oath, but the report about the oath is indispensable for the reader to understand the sequel.

⁴The passage is preceded by the farewell address of Joshua, and the phrase introduces the narrative of his death. There is no causal relationship, but certainly an intimate relationship between these events. The significance of the address is enhanced by the proximity of the record of Joshua's death (cf. the blessings of Jacob in Gen 49:1-28 with his obituary in the remainder of the chapter; the blessings of Moses and his obituary, Deut 33 with 34:1-8, etc.), pace Coats, Genesis, p. 123.

In 1 Kgs 13:33 we have the phrase haddâbâr hazzeh (singular) instead of hadd^abârim hâ'êlleh, in the context of a very strong connection between reported events.¹

The data suggest that the phrases are indeed associated with intimate connections between events reported immediately at either side, especially in the 'ahar (sing.) forms. This occurs seven out of eight instances in which these form are employed.

The relationship, however, is not always directly causal, especially in the plural 'ah^arêy forms. For the latter we have one instance which is clearly causal, plus three which are non-causal but intimate.

One must now take up the passages that introduce divine revelations. In Gen 22:1, the preceding event is the construction of a cultic place by Abraham at Beersheba, embellished with a tamarisk grove (21:33). The sequel is the trial of Abraham by means of a revelation demanding Isaac as an holocaust.

Connections are not obvious here. One could posit for this passage a link with the preceding context through

¹It is preceded by the prophetic announcement of calamities to come upon Jeroboam for his idolatry, confirmed by several miracles. "After this ['ahar haddâbâr hazzeh] Jeroboam still did not abandon his evil ways." In this common translation (NEB) "still" has been inferred from the context; the Hebrew text expresses the stubbornness of Jeroboam by "after this" only. It is difficult to imagine a stronger connection with the preceding context. Curiously, Coats, Genesis, p. 123, cites this verse as his instance of the phrase linking two "unrelated units." He gives no rationale for seeing these units as unrelated.

the sacrificial cultus. Indeed, such relationship has been argued on the basis that the planting of a tamarisk near a cultic place is seen in the Pentateuch as contrary to God's will, hence the purging trial in ch 22.¹ But links of this kind have not been favored by other exegetes so far,² and the witness of this passage, therefore, should be counted against close relationships.

In any case expressions as "after these events" or "after this" fit well almost all occurrences of the Hebrew idiom 'hr/-y hdbz/-ym hzh/h'lh in their contexts and remain open to close connections with the preceding narrative.

The few possible exceptions (as Gen 22:1), where connections are hard to find, are to be expected in a corpus of fourteen occurrences. An author may occasionally have used an idiom loosely, or he may have had in mind a connection which he subsequently failed to make clear.

Therefore, the predominant trend in the use of this phrase recommends the adoption of the translation: "After these events." The foregoing structural study suggested that the whole of the Abraham's narrative cycle up to that point, showing God's guidance, functions as the "antecedent

¹y. Koler, "The Binding of Isaac," Beth Mikra 97 (1984): 117-27.

²An ancient exception is Gen. R. 55:4. Abraham was dissatisfied with the relatively minor character of the victims he had so far offered to God, hence the trial.

history" for covenant, and the present study shows that the phrase is fully consistent with this function.

bammah^a-zeh

Our structural study showed that the opening oracle fulfils a crucial role in the unit, and that the latter repeatedly returns to the elements of the former. One should, therefore, pay special attention to the rendering of oracular expressions. The translation of mahazah by "vision," though hallowed by use and etymologically sound,¹ is somewhat misleading, since the term is never associated with visual images in the Bible.²

Instead, in Num 24:4,16, the term is paralleled by 'imrêy-'êl, "the words of God," and in Ezek 13:7, it is linked to an alleged n^e'um YHWH, an "oracle of God," which, however, He has "not spoken." Since in Gen 15:1, which completes the list of occurrences, it is similarly associated with dâbar YHWH, verbal rather than visual contents are clearly indicated by all contexts.

As many other loanwords adopted in languages that have nevertheless exact native equivalents,³ this Aramaic root developed in Hebrew a specialized sense as "a

¹See in previous chapter, on the Samaritan Targum, under the lemma "in prophecy."

²Jepsen, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, 4: 283 states this of another hzh derivative, hzwn. Cf., however, the occurrences in Dan 8.

³Ibid., p. 280 ff.

technical term for a nabi's revelation."¹

We have seen in the previous chapter that some midrashic documents, in particular the Targumim, are sensitive to this specialized sense. However, their solution, "in prophecy," is perhaps too comprehensive to be a good equivalent.

"In a revelation" seems to express better the force of the term and is preferable on etymological grounds for the English term as well. In this Latin-derived expression (revelatio), the allusion to a "drawing back (re-) the veil (velum)" functions as a visual metaphor for divine communications, just as *hzh* does in Hebrew.

'ânoki mîgên lâk

Since the self-predication of Yahweh is so prominent in the unit, one must devote close attention to its content, expressed with the consonants *mgn*. The consonantal text offers the following options for vocalization: (1) *mîgên* (noun) = "shield," as MT and modern versions; (2) *mêgên* (Hiph. ptcp. *gnn*) = "protector," as the older versions; (3) *mogên* (Qal ptcp. *mgn*) = "the one awarding, bestowing" as proposed by Kessler (followed by McGonigal);² (4) *mîgân* (title of high officer) = "bene-

¹Ibid., p. 283.

²Kessler, *VT* 14: 494-7; McGonigal, "Abraham Believed God," pp. 55 ff.

factor, suzerain," as proposed by Dahood.¹

Vocalizations (1) and (2) treat these letters as a form of *gnn*,² (3) and (4) as forms of a verb *mgn*. The root to which we attribute the form determines the substance of the translation.

To evaluate these proposals, the first two options can be considered together, since in this context "shield" can hardly be understood as anything other than a metaphor for protection.

The last two options are also etymologically close, but Kessler would make "your exceedingly great reward" the object of the verb *mgn*: "I am about to give you your exceedingly great reward"; while Dahood's equivalent would keep two separate clauses: "I am your Suzerain who will reward you very greatly."³ With this latter suggestion one could also class Freedman-O'Connor's: "I am your Giver" or "your Donor"⁴--i.e., ultimately "your Benefactor."

¹M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography IV," *Biblica* 47 (1966): 414. See also idem, *Psalms*, Anchor Bible, (16)1: 16-17.

²For the etymology of *māgên*, see previous chapter under Palestinian Targum for Gen 15:1.

³*Psalms*, AB 16(1): 17. He repoints *škrk* as a participle, a suggestion that cannot be evaluated here in the absence of definite evidence for abandoning the MT reading.

⁴Also reading *mogên*, lit. "Geber, Schenker." See Freedman and O'Connor, "*magen*," *Botterweck-Ringgren-Fabry, Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984) 4: 658.

Proposals to read here the trilateral root **mgn** are attractive since it seems to fit well the ensuing mention of "reward" and Abraham's question, "What can you give me?"¹ But they are not exempt from problems.

First of all, the root **mgn** is a relatively rare word in Hebrew, with only three undisputed occurrences in the Bible (Gen 14:20, Hos 11:8, and Prov 4:9), all in Piel. But Kessler and Freedman and O'Connor need to read here a Qal ptcp.²

Besides, its occurrence in Gen 15:1 is completely unsupported in ancient versions. It first appears in Gen. R., but with the secondary character of an 'al tigrè',³ and specifically contrasted in meaning to "reward," instead of having this as its object. This employment suggests that the ancients were aware of the possibility of reading the root **mgn** in the consonants of Gen 15:1, but rejected it as

¹This is determinant of the position of Freedman and O'Connor.

²This observation, already in Gunkel, Genesis, p. 179, is countered by Kessler with the example of **dbr**, "predominantly in Piel" but also presenting some Qal ptcps ("The 'Shield'" 496). The frequency of such occurrences, however, is extremely low (3% of **dbr** instances).

³Notice the comment of J. Neusner to Gen. R. 54:6, to the effect that rearrangement of the letters is familiar to the readers of this document. For the nature of 'l tgr̄y, and its implicit recognition of the traditional reading, see e.g., B. Gerhardsson, Memory and Manuscript, Acta Sem. Neot. Upsaliensis (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, and Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1961), pp. 36-37.

far as the plain meaning of the text was concerned.¹

Lastly, the injunction not to be afraid seems to require some explanation within the oracle itself in terms of protection from the envisioned dangers and not merely a promise of honorific prizes.² The adoption of the translation "I am giving you your reward" here would decidedly obscure the reasons why Abraham should abandon his fears. I thus decline to follow Kessler at this point.

The same objection does not apply with the same force to option (4), either in the Dahood or in the Freedman and O'Connor form. Since they preserve the self-predication of the Lord by means of an epithet, they provide a suitable motive not to be afraid: "Fear not, since I am Such-and-Such to you."

Both Dahood and Freedman and O'Connor's suggestions lead back to the idea of protection. If one follows Dahood,³ then the suzerainty promises in mind refer

¹In Gen. R. it appears in the framework of an intricate eschatology (see discussion in previous chapter).

²This is the predominant sense of *mgn* both in the Biblical (e.g., Prov 4:9) and extra-Biblical occurrences (see Botterweck and Ringgren, eds. *TWAT* 4: 658). The admonition not to fear followed by a promise of prizes would imply a sense much like Josephus', q.v.

³Dahood's "argument proceeds from Ps lxxxiv 12 [=84:11], which virtually defines a suzerain" (*Psalms*, 16(1): 16). It involves the revised translation of several terms, as, e.g., *šmš*, lit. "sun," traditionally understood in that context as the name of a round shield, but which Dahood assimilates to the title of Hittite and Egyptian sovereigns, hence "suzerain."

primarily to the protective duties of the overlord towards the vassal--hence, "Do not fear." On the other hand, if one prefers to see here "I am your Benefactor," then the close-by occurrence of *miggên* in 14:20 points to the recent deliverance from enemies as the immediate instance of the alluded benefactions.¹

Therefore, since option (2) is the best documented in antiquity, as well as the one that best encloses the substance of the remaining acceptable options, and since it is not clear whether a conscious reference to *gnn* remains in the term even if the total effect equals "suzerain,"² I choose to translate this part: "I am your Protector."

šēkārka harbêh mē'od

There is general agreement on the secular sense of the root *škr*: as a verb (*šâkar*) it means "hire,"³ and as a noun (*šâkâr*) "wages,"⁴ rent,⁵ transportation fare,⁶ recom-

¹As, e.g., in Coats, Genesis, p. 123.

²When dealing with context and structure, we found that suzerainty concepts are indeed imbedded in the passage. Protectorship is of the essence of suzerainty, with generosity in grants a close second. Whether derived from *gnn* or *mgn*, the idea of "suzerain" at 15:1-6 is clearly configured by the content of the passage as a whole.

³2 Kgs 7:6; this and following references exemplify the given equivalent in Holladay's Lexicon, except as otherwise indicated.

⁴Gen 30:16.

⁵Exod 22:14; TDNT 4: 697.

pense,"¹ and other returns for investment of either capital or services, whether in accordance with an explicit previous contract or not.² According to some authors, there was a theological development of the noun in the sense of "reward of grace,"³ but the allegedly probatory passages (Isa 40:10, 62:11; Jer 31:16; Sir 2:8, 11:22) are open to theological debate.⁴

Cazelles discusses but does not finally pronounce on the possibility that m^c'od means here "real estate." This would imply a translation such as "Your reward will be much land." Though grammatically and contextually plausible, the interpretation assumes a sense for m^c'od which would be rare in any case, but especially unique when accompanied, as here, by harbêh--a commonplace combination, as he himself notes.⁵

The "Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible" translates this part of the verse "ta solde sera considérablement accrue," which may be rendered "your pay will be increased

¹Gen 30:18; TDNT 4: 697.

²See previous note.

³TDNT 4: 697; see also von Rad's position below, under "theological ideas."

⁴For an attempt at clarification, see below under "theological ideas."

⁵RB 69: 328.

considerably."¹ This implies that a lesser pay already existed. The usage of the infinitive Hiph. absolute *harbêh*, however, makes this assumption unnecessary (see e.g., Deut 3:5: the number of unwalled villages was "very large," not "increased," when the Israelites entered Bashan).

For the determination of the precise content of the self-predication, a syntactical question is also important. Are both *mgn* and *šâkâr* predicates joined to 'ânokî, so as to have God saying "I am your Protector, [and also] your exceedingly great reward," or does the second part initiate another sentence: "Your reward [shall be] very great"? In the first case the "reward" would be part of the self-predication, which would give a new turn to the exegesis of the passage.

The textual reading that has a *waw* prefixed to *šâkâr*, as noticed above, would smooth the text out for the first possibility, but it is not a necessary concomitant of such interpretation,² neither does the previous dismissal of this reading automatically discard the double predicate.

¹Ancien Testament, Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible (Paris: Cerf, 1976)2, ad loc.

²The converse is not true: if the conjunction is adopted, then both "reward" and "protector" are predicates for "I." Otherwise, if the conjunction is to be kept with a new sentence, a 3d. person *hyh* form would be expected with "reward." Thus, the classical Post-Reformation versions are probably following an ancient version with the conjunction, probably the Vulgate. See Skinner, ICC 1: 278.

The major disjunction in the te^camin of the MT at 15:1b comes immediately before šākār.¹ However, the truly decisive argument against the double predicate, as already indicated in 1921 by A. Fernández, is contextual.² The difficulties in fitting the quasi-mystical concept of God as the believer's reward into the straightforward character of Genesis are only one aspect of this line of reasoning. Also, if God presents Himself here as the patriarch's reward, then Abraham's question, "What will you give me?" is out of place, and God's reply, pointing to a son and not to Himself, only adds to the confusion.

Therefore, I agree with Skinner and most recent translations in making of "your reward" the start of a new sentence:³ "Your reward will be very great."

Proposed translation

1. "After these events, the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a revelation, in these terms:
 "Do not be afraid, Abram:
 I am your Protector.
 Your reward will be very great."

¹Gen 15:1b is divided from 15:1a by the chief accent within a verse, the 'aṭnāḥ. Within the half-verse, the zaqep at lāk marks the main disjunction.

²"Ego protector tuus sum et merces tua magna nimis," Verbum Domini 1 (1921): 25-27.

³ICC 1: 278. The few recent versions that, as the NEB, join "reward" to the preceding sentence do so following Kessler's proposal, or (as NAB) the Samaritan reading. A notorious exception is NIV.

Inquiry about the Promise

wayvo'mer 'abrām . . .
wə'ānoki hōlêk ʕʕriri

This first part of Gen 15:2 offers no great difficulties for translation. The precise sense of hōlêk and ʕʕriri are the points that have attracted greatest attention among translators, and they are presently reviewed.

Several authors have argued that the verb hlk does not by itself connote leaving life.¹ We have seen that the interpretation they reject is at least as old as 1QapGen, and 2 Chr 21:20 does refer to death through hlk without additional explanatory words.² The translation "depart," suggesting an euphemism for death, makes excellent sense in context.³ As Clements remarks,⁴ the

¹H. Cazelles, "Connexions," p. 329; von Rad, Das erste Buch Mose. Genesis (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972) ad loc.; McGonigal, "Abraham Believed God," p. 61. Their main argument is that where hlk refers to death, other expressions in the context determine this meaning. Westermann, Gen 12-36 219, finds an exception in Ps 39:14. Death is no doubt alluded there, but since Ps 39:13 begins the metaphor of a "stranger" or "sojourner," the sense "die" in "I depart" seems determined by that figure of speech rather than by any usual connotation in hlk itself.

²Anbar, JBL 101: 42. The general context of 2 Chr 21:20 does make the reader to expect something about the death of the king here; but so does Abram's preoccupation with an heir in Gen 15.

³See in the former chapter an analysis of 1QapGen 22.33.

⁴Abraham and David, p. 18, n. 12.

question of an heir (which cannot be separated from Abram's death) is vital to the whole section.¹

Cazelles' contention that ^ʿʾriri means "stirred up" is even less convincing. Though Caquot agrees with Cazelles on the sense of *hōlēk* here, he appeals to 15:3 to show that the main idea communicated by ^ʿʾriri must be childlessness.² The etymology suggests "stripped bare,"³ i.e., fruitless, barren, desolate.

"Childless" is perhaps too neutral a term to express ^ʿʾriri.⁴ Lev 20:20-21 shows that "barrenness" is sufficiently severe as to constitute the punishment for two kinds of forbidden unions, while the other kinds carry almost uniformly the pain of death. Jer 22:30 states that Jehoiachin is to be "recorded" as "childless" (^ʿʾriri) with the following implications:

a man who will not prosper in his lifetime,
for none of his offspring will prosper,
none will sit on the throne of David
or rule anymore in Judah.

The dynastic deprivation associated with the condition of ^ʿʾriri suggests that in Genesis, too, Abraham's main concern is with the succession to the vassal capacity arising from the offered covenantal relationship.

¹Pace McGonigal, "Abraham Believed God," p. 61.

²"L'Alliance," p. 57. See also Clements, Abraham and David, p. 18, n. 12.

³See former chapter on 1QapGen, on ^ʿrtly/ dl' bnyh.

⁴See Westerman, Promises, pp. 132 ff.

This indicates the seriousness of Abraham's predicament.

On the other hand, NEB's "I have no standing among men" is too free a paraphrase. Hence I propose "I depart barren."

ûben mešeq bêyti hû'
damešeq 'êli^c-ezer

In contrast to 15:2a, the last part of the verse has been guessed at, amended or just avoided in translation for thousands of years, as the former chapter reminded us. The same options remain open today,¹ with the difference that the almost innumerable proposals for a solution to the problems involved are now more readily available.² In spite of all these efforts, "the clause as a whole is generally regarded as hopeless."³

Even so, one must tackle the difficulties again. Since the query of Abraham arises from the previous study as one of the main structural divisions of the passage, no effort at understanding its contours should be spared.

¹Among the moderns who renounce to translate the passage, one finds Gunkel, Genesis, p. 179; R. de Vaux et al., Bible de Jérusalem (Paris: du Cerf, 1961), ad loc.; A. Ehrlich, Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1968) 1:58 ("unübersetzbar"); Westermann, Genesis 12-36, p. 219 ("cannot be translated"), etc.

²Works that tried to synthesize or compile these modern solutions are listed in C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1981), p. 220.

³Speiser, Genesis, AB 1, p. 111.

Proposed emendations are legion,¹ but they hardly could be relevant to a study informed by ancient midrashic works which did not feel as free as the moderns to correct the consonantal text. Thus, only explanations that start from the latter are considered here.

ûben mešeq bēyti

In **ûben mešeq bēyti** the main difficulty is the sense of **mešeq**, a hapax in the Hebrew Bible. Lacking Biblical passages for a study of contexts, attempts at finding the meaning resort to cognate languages and/or to related Hebrew expressions for illumination. A classification of these attempts follows.

mšq as a personal name. We have seen in the former chapter that this is the reading of LXX Jub: "and the son of Maseq, my houseborn maid." Among the moderns, Seebass has defended this solution.² In his view, "house(born) maid" represents **bat bēyti**, literally "daughter of my house," which was present in the Vorlage of those versions,³ and it is to be considered the better reading, lost to the MT tradition through haplography (**bt bty** --> **bty**).

¹Some of them may be found in Skinner, ICC 1: 279; A. Caquot, Sem 12: 57, n. 1; M. Weippert, "Abraham der Hebräer?" Biblica 52 (1971): 420-1, n. 1.

²Horst Seebass, "Gen 15: 2b," ZAW 75 (1963): 317-9.

³He may well be right in this point, though a textually minimalistic alternative explanation is also feasible. See in the former chapter the analysis of this phrase in Jubilees.

But in contrast to the "maid" concept of those old versions, Seebass takes the "daughter of Abraham's house" to be a relative of higher social standing than her husband. This would explain the unusual circumstance of a free son (and thus a potential heir) named after his mother.

But the idea of a high social standing for Maseq makes Seebass' conjectural emendation of the consonantal text essential to this view, since "the son of the Maseq of my house" (i.e., his text minus the conjectural bt) does not seem a respectful way to refer to a socialite relative. It sounds, precisely as LXX and Jub take it, as a reference to a servant. Such familiarity is not present in Seebass' reconstruction. However, as explained above, I am not concerned with conjectural emendations.

Thus, to follow this understanding for ~~m~~sq within the textual constraints already set, one must turn to the translation in LXX, Jub. This is somewhat difficult. One would expect the text either to relate this individual to his true father,¹ or to be more explicit about the family

¹The text explicitly states that the "son" of 15:2 was not the biological son of Abraham (15:4). If the true father was known to be a relative of Abraham, it is strange that Abraham did not refer to this kinsman instead of the otherwise unknown Maseq, since we are contemplating the idea of a mother who was not his social better. If, on the other hand, the true father was unknown or known not to be related to Abraham, then (barring adoption or legitimation of some kind) Maseq herself must have had some family connection for her son to have claims to heirship.

connections of this female "Maseq,"¹ or about legal adoption proceedings involving her son.²

mšq as a place name. Albright took mšq to be a reference to the marl in the Golan-Hauran-Damascus area, used for scouring or polishing metals (the root means in Arabic "to rub"). He would thus identify the silver utensil termed in Ugaritic mišqu (PRU III 182) as "mirror" (for its high polish). Ultimately, then, ben mešeq would mean "native of Damascus."³

The same final sense is obtained by Speiser from another derivation: šqy, "to water," an allusion to Damascus "having water resources."⁴ As evidence, he cites

¹The idea of a kinswoman by the name of Maseq raises its own problems. Why would she be called "the Maseq of my house" instead of a term more descriptive of the family relationship? Why are we not given any more information about this woman, even though her name is preserved?

²The idea of adoption or legitimation for the "son of Abraham's house," though not improbable in itself (since we are dealing with a barren couple), is also questionable. What is unlikely is that such legal proceedings be alluded cryptically in the phrase "the Maseq of my house" instead of clearly stated in the text. This is all the harder to believe in the face of the great detail given in the narrative to the parallel case of Ishmael. Thus the LXX Jub translation remains problematic.

³W. F. Albright, "Abraham the Hebrew: A New Archaeological Interpretation," Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 163 (1961): 47. Though Skinner states that "bn with the name of a city is contrary to Heb. idiom" (ICC, 1: 279), this is disputed by M. Unger, "Some Comments on the Text of Genesis 15: 2,3," Journal of Biblical Literature 72 (1953): 50, n. 4.

⁴Genesis ad loc. and JAOS 71: 257.

the fact that the name Damascus was represented in Akkadian as *ša-imêrišu* and that an *imêru* (besides meaning "donkey") was an artifact used for lifting (perhaps a windlass or pulley) in battering rams, boats, and also irrigation equipment.¹

A. Caquot also sees Damascus as the content of *mešeq*. He, however, does not offer any particular etymology (which in any case would be irrelevant to the narrative), but understands *Mešeq* as the eponym of the city or kingdom of Damascus.²

Proposals of this kind are prompted by the observation of an alliteration between *mšq* and *dmšq* in 15:2b. The latter term is then taken as an explanatory gloss on the former. But, as Cazelles remarks, if the text tried to relate both forms, it is strange that the scribes kept the distinction between *šin* and *sin*.³

Those proposals are also plagued by the need to provide a meaningful predicate for "the Damascene of my house." The mere rendering "the son of Meseq of my house (which is Damascus) is Eliezer" would hardly suffice, since it leaves us in the dark concerning just what was Abraham complaining about with such a statement. This, in any

¹See M. Civil et al., The Assyrian Dictionary (henceforth CAD) (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1977), s.v.

²Caquot, Sem 12: 57-58.

³RB 69: 330.

case, would be inconsequential following 15:2a.

Accordingly, they supplement this rendering with conjectural emmendations (Albright: ûben mešeq ben bêyti) or complicated syntactical constructions (Speiser: "the two [terms] were further juxtaposed to signify hereditary succession"). The implication is that the Damascene was a "son of the house" and, as such, the successor.¹

However, there are problems in making any phrase that approaches the form "son of the house" to mean simply "successor." As several authors have remarked, such equation would transform 15:3 into a tautology.² The best attested equivalent seems to be "member of my household,"³ i.e., a dependent of Abraham.

Albright ran into additional problems when explaining that the Damascene mentioned here was not a humble servant, but a rich citizen who lent capital to Abraham on condition of becoming his son by adoption and thus having

¹This is taking Speiser's "juxtaposition" to mean that "son of my house" and "son of Meseq" are combined in a single expression: "son of Meseq of my house." The explanation of Speiser is not absolutely transparent. T. L. Thompson, The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives, BZAW 133 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), p. 205, calls it "little more than obfuscation."

²See, e.g., *ibid.*, p. 206.

³See bibliography cited in Westermann, Gen 12-36, p. 220.

the property of the patriarch as a collateral.¹ But these issues belong to exegesis, not to translation as such.

Caquot, on his part, also resorts to unusual syntactical explanations to provide a predicate for *ûben mešeq*. In his view, *bêyti* is the predicate sought for, "qui peut être un locatif,"² and accordingly translates: "the son of Mešeq is in my house." He does not explain why this rare form is here preferred by the text to a plain *ûben mešeq babbêyti*. "The son of Mešeq" here discussed could be a Damascene or at least an Aramean prince or court dignitary somehow related to Abraham,³ and in a position to inherit or at least "dispossess" (*yrš*) him.

mšq as a common noun or participle. In this kind of proposal, the term *mšq* is seen, not as a proper name, but as a significant word in terms of the narrative, characterizing the action or position of the involved individual.

Cazelles, citing Gordon, Donner, and Eissfeldt, identified the Ugaritic *mšq* utensil (PRU 183, cf. Albright above) as a silver cup, according to the meaning of the *šqy*

¹Thompson, *Historicity*, pp. 196-230.

²*Sem.* 12: 57, n. 1. He does not, however, explain how *byty* can be the predicate in the event that the locative sense for this word be dismissed.

³The position of this Damascene in the patriarch's family would also imply that he was in a sense subject or subordinated to him (*ibid.*, p. 58).

root.¹ A "son of the drinking cup," or "cupbearer," would actually refer to a high officer, perhaps "commander" as the rab-šaqeh of 2 Kgs 18:17 ff.; Isa 36:2 ff. As he himself observed, his interpretation is reminiscent of Aquila's Greek translation, *potizontos*. One should here note, however, that specialists related this Assyrian title, not to šaqu II, "drink," but to šaqu I, "be high, rise."²

Snijders connected the term with the root šqq, "rush (forth), charge."³ He would thus repoint the Genesis term as maššaq (Isa 33:4), "onslaught." A "son of onslaught" would be an attacker, which he exegetes as an usurper or unwanted successor.

This would imply that bēyti stands in an objectival genitive relationship to mšq (i.e., that which is being attacked is "my house"). The same derivation as Snijder's, or better yet mēšēq (Hiph. ptcp. of šqq), but with bēyti in a subjectival genitive relationship would again yield the sense "the commander of my house" (as the one who orders the y^llîdêy bēytô to attack, cf. 14:14). This idea is not to be dismissed lightly in view of the foregoing military

¹RB 69: 330f.

²F. Delitzsch, Assyrisches Handwörterbuch (Leipzig: Hinrich'sche, 1896), s.v. šaqu.

³Snijders, OTS 12:269-71. Senses for the root quoted here according to Holladay, Lexicon; Snijders gives "plunge into something, take by surprise."

ventures of Abraham, and the traditions that identify Eliezer as his lieutenant.¹ But if a day-to-day function for this individual is preferred to a military one, then the participle could be interpreted as "he who makes my house servants to rush to and fro" (cf. šqq Hitpalpel in Nah 2:5), i.e., something akin to "my foreman."

Gordon resorts to the dmšq = ša imērišu Assyrian equation to identify mšq as "donkey." Thus a ben mešeq would be a "donkey boy," or servant, and the dmšq of this same verse (perhaps to be read dmšq) would be the Aramaic version of the same expression. The main difficulty with this explanation is that neither Hebrew nor Aramaic documents know anything about a mšq donkey,² let alone servant.

In contrast to the foregoing proper-name proposals, the common-noun or participle interpretations can be fitted easily into the narrative without textual or syntactical contorsions. Some form of them must also have been present in the mind of the authors of the literal Targumim (STg TgO) and Jerome, who render "steward" or the like.³ Their

¹See former chapter under Palestinian Targum. For the importance of the previous military context, see Cazelles, RB 69: 330; Schmid, EvTh 40: 399.

²A point made, for Aramaic, by Speiser, JAOS 71: 257.

³Kittel (see apparatus in Biblia Hebraica) interprets that TgO read bn mšl . However, there is no documented instance of such a reading anywhere. The mšq consonants have been preserved outside the Rabbinic

very diversity, however, underlines the linguistic uncertainty of the expression.

mšq as an abstract noun. F. Pomponio observes that *mušaqum* in Eblaite means "future gift," hence it could come to mean "inheritance." Thus he suggests the sense "heir" for *bn mšq* in Gen 15:2.¹ This makes excellent sense in context² and must not be confused with the proposal of Speiser and others, derived from the idiom "the son of my house." Though the latter results in the same meaning, it creates a tautology in 15:3, while Pomponio's does not. The main difficulty is the lack of attestation of such sense in Hebrew or Aramaic, as well as the conjectural character of the gift-to-inheritance development of *mušaqum*, or its back-projection on the *mšq* abstract noun.

E. Dhorme thought that one could deduce the meaning of the hapax through a study of Zeph 2:9. The prophet announces that the Lord will judge Moab, transforming it into a place of salt-pits and a *mimšaq* of weeds. From this

tradition not only in the LXX, but also in the Samaritan tradition, where the Targum reads either *mdbr* or *mprns* (leader, steward). Thus this translation does not depend on a variant reading of the text.

¹F. Pomponio, "Méšeq di Gen 15,2 e un termine amministrativo di Ebla," Bibbia e Oriente 25 (1983): 107-9.

²The Eblaite cognate also fits nicely in the patriarchal age. In a personal communication, Dr. William Shea called attention to this fact.

he infers that **mšq** may mean "possession, inheritance."¹ He does not detail the connection, but one can assume this is related to the fact that some words for "possession" in the OT (as, e.g., ***ḥuzzah**) have the concrete meaning "a plot of land" (e.g., Gen 23:4), and that Zeph is speaking of ground covered with weeds. The term under study, sharing with **mimšaq** the same triliteral root, would have in Gen 15:2 the abstract rather than the concrete sense. However, Dhorme made no attempt in his footnote to prop up the meager Biblical evidence for his view with other linguistic information.

Skinner has warned against taking Zeph 2:9 as evidence of a root **mšq**.² But since proposals have been posited on even less evidence,³ his warning is not likely to be heeded.

Indeed, **mimšaq** looks like a bona fide noun of the **miqtal** type built on a **mšq** root. It is instructive to compare it with the near-by noun of the same type in the same expression: **mimšaq ḥārul umikrêh mélah**. The **mikrêh** is in this context "a land for digging (out salt)" (**miqtal**-type built on **krh** I, "to dig"), just as a **mirmas** (Isa 5:5, built on **rms**, "to trample") is "a land for trampling." It

¹E. Dhorme, La Bible (Paris: de la Pléiade, 1956), ad Gen 15:2, n. 2.

²ICC, 1: 279, notes.

³Cf., for instance, Gordon's, with no Hebrew or Aramaic evidence whatsoever.

is difficult to avoid the impression that Zeph 2:9 characterizes plots of ground according to the function they are destined to serve.

This function should be identifiable through the root on which the *miqtal*-type nouns are built, taken together with the object noun to which it is related in the context. Since Zeph 2:9 is obviously a prophecy of desolation, the weed-related function that first comes to mind for such plots of land is raising those weeds (*ḥarul*).

Do we have any evidence in Semitic languages for a root *mšq* = "to raise" besides the Hebrew of Zeph 2:9? For one thing we have the lifting or raising device (*imêru*) that the Assyrians saw alluded in the *mšq* part of *dmšq* (see above on Speiser and Gordon). As mentioned before, this lifting device was not confined to irrigation purposes, and thus its name probably reflected its general raising function rather than aquatic ideas (pace Speiser).

Indeed, one can prove that the Akkadian root *imr* corresponds to Common Semitic *ḥmr* (cf. the "donkey" sense, *imeru* = *ḥ^amôr*) which was variously employed for "boiling, foaming, fermenting" (actions in which a liquid rises), "bitumen," so called because of its "rising to the surface,"¹ for heaps (which rise upon the ground), etc. This

¹J. A. Strong gives this etymological explanation in his Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary, s.v. *chêmâr* (*hêmâr*).

suggests that **mšq** was translated by the Assyrians as **imeru** with the intended meaning of "raising."

This perception would have been far from unreasonable in view of related roots as Akkadian **šaqu I**, "to rise."¹ A very common phenomenon in Semitic languages is that of (originally biliteral) roots extended by various means, including an **m-** at the beginning and **-w/y** (Heb. **-h**) at the end.² Thus a close relationship in meaning between **šaqu I** = "rising" and **mšq**, though not a complete identity, may be expected.³

Taking a clue from this connection, a **ben mešeq** would be literally a "son of raising." This "raising" in context might have the sense of "nurture," as in **mimšaq harul**, which fosters the growth of weeds. This would yield the final meaning "foster-child." Alternatively, the "raising" could be understood as "promoting to higher

¹See above on **rab-šaqeh**.

²The biconsonantal origin of many roots was noted by G. R. Driver, Problems of the Hebrew Verbal System (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), pp. 3-8, esp. p. 5. The subject has been taken up also by M. Cohen, Essai comparatif sur la vocabulaire et la phonétique du chamito-semitique (Paris: H. Champion, 1969), p. 59; and E. Ullendorff, "What Is a Semitic Language?" Orientalia 27 (1958): 71. Instances of Hebrew roots beginning with **m-** which are semantically related to **Lamed He** roots with the same biconsonantal base include **mkr** "to sell" as compared to **krh II**, "bargain, buy"; **mhs** "smite to pieces" as compared to **hsh**, "to divide"; **m^cl** "act counter to one's duty" cf. **lwh**, "unruliness"; **m^ct** "be too small"; cf. **ṯh II** "grasp lice," etc. Senses quoted according to Holladay's Lexicon.

³Cf. also Akk. **mušaqitu**, "a woman who raises," CAD, s.v.

positions," as in *rab-šaqeh*, i.e., "high officer" or "steward" again. Both senses would fit the narrative well.

This suggestion has been here elaborated as part of a record of linguistic possibilities only. It is by no means presented as the definitive solution to the *crux interpretum*, though it has the advantage of exploring both intra- and extra-Biblical evidence. It also accords well with the Masoretic vocalization which, by implying a *qatl/qitl*-type original noun, is congruent with an abstract noun (as, e.g., *šedeq*).

For the difficult choice among these alternatives, one can note that (1) and (2) seem the most problematic options. As for (3) and (4), in spite of appealing to diverse roots for explanation, most of them turn out very close to each other, at least in their context-determined final meaning. Whether one translates "cupbearer/commander," "attacker/commander," "foreman," "foster-son/high employee," or the like, the significance for the narrative would be approximately the same: Abraham is speaking about the chief dependent in his household (*bn byty*). Given the linguistic uncertainty, I prefer to follow this unspecific rendition.

hû' dammešeq 'ēli'ezer

The rest of Gen 15:2, *hû' dammešeq 'ēli'ezer*, is even more problematic in spite of being composed by a personal pronoun and two proper names only. The difficulty

consists in the unexpected order for the proper nouns dammešeq 'ēli'ezer. This cannot be translated "Eliezer of Damascus" (which would require the opposite sequence), while "Damascus of Eliezer," though conforming to the order of subordination, would be meaningless. Assuming no subordination, the apposition "Damascus, i.e., Eliezer"¹ would normally require dammešeq 'ēšer 'ēli'ezer.² Despairing, Speiser has merely transliterated "Dammesek Eliezer," which avoids the issue but does not illuminate the text.³

On the other hand, those who, like Skinner, argue that the verse is untranslatable go probably too far in maintaining that "it is difficult to imagine what Damascus can have to do here at all."⁴ Snijders,⁵ Caquot,⁶ Anbar,⁷ and others, on the contrary, see great relevance in that mention. In view of the antecedent promises of a posterity which would constitute a nation and of its matching land (12:2; 13:14ff), the fact that the chief dependent of his

¹So Keil and Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament vol. 1, Pentateuch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 211; Caquot, Sem 12: 57, and others.

²Cf. Skinner, ICC, 1:279.

³Genesis, p. 110. This has been sharply criticized by Thompson, who believes that Speiser meant it as an adjective, "Damascene" (Historicity, p. 205).

⁴ICC, 1:279.

⁵OTS 12:270-1.

⁶Sem 12:57-58.

⁷JBL 101: 42, n. 21.

household is already rooted in Damascus must be seen as important.

Thus the explanation of Caquot, in terms of an eponym for the city or kingdom of Damascus, seems valuable. One can research the linguistic usage associated with eponyms through the occurrences of "Israel" in the Hebrew Bible. This is the eponym ancestor of the Hebrew nation, and besides commonplace references to Jacob the patriarch, the Northern kingdom or the people collectively, we find it also used for individual Israelites (1 Sam 2:14).¹ The use of the eponym's name instead of gentilic adjectives stresses the religious aspect of nationality,² and hence the inner core of the constitutive traits of peoplehood as opposed to the merely accidental.

Thus we can take into account Skinner's objections to "Eliezer of Damascus" (as not allowed by the word order), as well as to "the Damascene Eliezer" (as an arbitrary modification of the text) and to "Damascus, i.e., Eliezer" (which would require an 'אֵלֶּזֶר here lacking) and still translate the expression. Since "an Israel," when applied to individual Hebrews, means "an Israel national,"

¹Notice the limitation to those Israelites "who came to Shiloh" and the private character of those offerings. The numerous references to "all Israel" can also be interpreted as "every Israelite." Cf. also the usage in Mishnaic Heb., as exemplified in E. ben Yehuda, Dictionary and Thesaurus of the Hebrew Language (New York: Yoseloff, 1960), s.v. "Israel," 2d acceptance.

²W. Gutbrod, art. "Israel," TDNT 3: 360.

one can assume that "a Damascus" means "a Damascus citizen (or subject)." This would stress the roots of Eliezer in Damascus better than "Eliezer the Damascene." Therefore, the expression in Gen 15:2b can be translated "is the Damascus citizen Eliezer."¹

ben bēyti

Though important, Gen 15:3 does not present major difficulties to the translator. There is also some reiteration of concepts between 15:2 and 15:3. Thus I comment on a few points only.

In 15:3 *ben bēyti* occurs instead of the more complex expression of 15:2. There is no reason to abandon the translation "household dependent," even though the context makes clear that dependents other than legitimate children are meant.

The stress of the sentence falls precisely on this part. In other words, the text is not taking for granted the existence of dependents and then stating that one of them will be an heir. On the contrary, it takes for granted that there will be a successor and states that the latter will be a household dependent.

Lacking legitimate sonship, Abraham's potential successor could only claim being the patriarch's dependent as his highest title to succession. He would succeed

¹The article is implied in the definite intrinsic character of proper names.

Abraham in such character. Hence "a household dependent [i.e., not a son] is the one who will succeed me." This turn of expression aims to reproduce the stress implicit in the word-order of the original. It keeps "household dependent" in the same sequence with respect to the main subject as *ben bēyti* in the Hebrew sentence.¹

"Succession" is here preferred to "inheritance" since the range of senses of *yrš* is wider than the latter English term.² A narrow concept of "inherit" as the exclusive content of the term has led Westermann to conclude that *yrš* belongs to a later age in which an emphasis on property substitutes for the patriarchal ideals of continuity and carrying-on of father's life.³ There is no need for such conclusions once the wider range of senses is recognized. Hostile senses, such as the "dispossessing" in conquest takeovers, are not warranted in this context, but the extension of this idea in replacement and succession remains very much present.

The repeated use of the demonstrative interjection

¹See Kautzsch, Grammar, sections # 142a, f, g (Kautzsch, ed., Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, 2d English ed. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1985] pp. 455 ff.).

²In the Abraham stories, *yrš* takes as an object "land" (15:7-8) and "the gate of one's enemies" (22:7, 24:60), thus suggesting "to be the succeeding possessor." But it also takes "you" as an object in the present passage and is used intransitively in 21:10, suggesting merely "to be the successor." See Snijders, OTS 12:267 ff.; see also Caquot, Sem 12: 56.

³Gen 12-36, pp. 220-1.

(hên, hinnêh) in close sequence can hardly be devoid of significance.¹ Though it can be construed in numerous ways, they all perform the function of calling attention to what follows.² Clearly, then, Abraham here expresses himself as if afraid that an overlook might take place. This implies that, at this point, God's promises are for him totally incongruous with his childlessness. The reiteration of the interjection thus expresses his strong objections. Hence the translation "note, notice."

Proposed translation

2. But Abram said:
"My Lord Yahweh, what will you give me, since I depart barren, and the chief dependent in my household is the Damascus citizen Eliezer?"
3. And Abram said:
"Note that you have given me no offspring, and notice that a household dependent is the one who will succeed me."

Divine Response

lo' yirâškâ zeh ki--'im
'âker yêšê mimmê'eykâ

I interpreted ben--bêyti in 15:3 not merely as an indefinite noun but as a category stressed by the syntax. This stress suggests that we take zeh in 15:4 to refer to

¹On meaningful repetition of terms, see M. Buber, Werke, 2. Bd., Schriften zur Bibel (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1964), p. 1131.

²Holladay, Lexicon, s.v. "hên," cites the passage under study to make the point. Ten nuances are offered for hinnêh.

the antecedent *ben--bēyti* category, as well as to Eliezer specifically. Hence, I render "such one" instead of the more limiting "this," which would point only to Eliezer.

I have chosen to express *mimmē^ceykā* through "from your own body" (as NIV, NEB, etc.) avoiding more anatomically explicit details.¹ In this I find myself coinciding with the ancient Targumim in tastes.

habbet--nā ... ūs^epor

Verse 5 is uncomplicated and translators have never wavered when rendering it. Nevertheless, it is useful to bring out some of the connotations of *nbṭ* and *spr*. The first term, usually translated "look" elsewhere in the Bible, is only one of many terms so rendered, at least occasionally.² The question then arises about its specific connotation. This has been determined as a look with understanding and appreciation,³ thus "observe, contemplate."

As for *spr*, the emphasis is no doubt on numbering, not, however, merely as a quantitative estimation, but including specification and detail.⁴

¹Cf. McGonigal, "Abraham Believed God," p. 65.

² They include *hwł*, *hzh*, *pnh*, *pqd*, *r'h*, *šgh*, *šwr*, *š^ch*, *šqp*, and *yn*.

³H. Ringgren, "*nbṭ*," in Botterweck-Ringgren, *TWAT*, 5: 138-9.

⁴See senses "register," "detail" etc., in Holladay, *Lexicon*, s.v. "*spr*."

An exclusive conception of *spr* as numbering has led at least one author, on the strength of this verse and archaeological evidence, to conclude that the ancients ascertained with the aid of primitive telescopes the number of stars as greater than the few thousands visible to the naked eye.¹ Once specification and detail are recognized as included in the meaning of the root, no such conclusions are necessary. Visible stars are certainly not numberless but numerous enough to make enumeration cumbersome.

Proposed translation

4. And then the word of Yahweh came to him in t h e s e terms:

"No such one will succeed you, but it is one coming from your own body who will succeed you."

5. He took him outdoors and said:

"Contemplate the skies and enumerate the stars, if you are able to tally them."

Then he told him:

"So shall your offspring be."

Concluding interaction

w^ehe'emin bYHWH

The he'emin has been explained in numerous diverse ways which have been listed and analyzed by Jepsen.² Most of those understandings were arrived at by means of etymology, the general function of the Hiphil stem in

¹"The Stars in the Heavens--Many or a Few?" Bible Review 3 (1987): 46-47.

²A. Jepsen, "'âman," section V, "Hiphil," TDOT, 1: 298-309.

Hebrew verbs, or the theological employment of the word in the OT and the NT.

Jepsen shows the unreliability of those methods and proceeds to discover the sense of 'an in Hiphil inductively. I here adopt his conclusions. As far as they concern the occurrence of this form together with a personal object, he suggests that the best translation is "to rely on" or "to trust in" that person.¹ Hence, 15:6a can be rightly translated: "So [Abraham] put his trust in Yahweh."²

As for the significance of the employment of a Perfect verbal form here, it can only be discussed in the verse as a whole. Accordingly, I deal with it in the next subsection in relationship with the translation proposal of Oeming.

wayyah^he-behâ lô ş^e-dâqâh

In contrast to the wide consensus in the translation of the previous three verses, one is here confronted with disagreement of momentous import for exegesis.

This compact expression, wayyah^he-behâ lô ş^e-dâqâh, has been traditionally analyzed as follows:

¹TDOT, 1: 308.

²As above, I tried to render the Hebrew paratactical usage of the conjunction idiomatically. Since the w^e here introduces the concluding remark for the whole pericope, I choose to underline this consequential character of the conjunction with "so."

A new grammatical subject (Yahweh) "considered" or "took" (hšb) one reality, alluded by means of a 3d feminine singular suffix (-h), "as" or "for" another reality, š^edāqāh, as it regards Abraham (lô). This implies that the verb here has two direct objects (-h, š^edāqāh) and an indirect one (lô). The whole constitutes a single, non-compounded sentence.

In the previous chapter I remarked that almost all ancient versions share this construction. Many of them, however, changed the turn of expression for the sake of clarity, from the active to the passive form of the verb, thereby avoiding the sudden variation of grammatical subject from 15:6a to 15:6b.¹

There are no grammatical or lexical difficulties in this interpretation. Since a lexicographical study of hšb and š^edāqāh has been already covered by dissertations dealing specifically with Gen 15:6,² it will not be repeated here.³ It is important to insist, however, that the sense "consider as, take for" of hšb does appear in

¹The only possible exception to this uniform understanding appears in a particular form of the STg, which may have understood 15:6b as meaning that the same subject, Abraham, considered "that" to be "true" (qšth, for šdqh) on God's part (lw). See previous chapter on STg.

²See McGonigal, "Abr. Believed God," pp. 67-95.

³See also the elucidation of the Pentateuchal sense of š^edāqāh in Wenham, Genesis, p. 330.

standard reference works,¹ and indeed is one of the most frequent acceptations of the term.² The double accusative for this verb when used in this sense is also on record as a particular instance of two direct objects for verba sentiendi.³ Isa 53:4 is a well-known passage that furnishes an example of such double accusative with *hšb*: "we considered him (or took him for) stricken by God." There, as in Gen 15:6b, the first direct object ("him") is expressed by the suffix on the verb (*hšabnuhú*).

In recent times this well-established translation has been challenged by L. Gaston.⁴ Attention is being paid to his work in academic circles,⁵ and so one should devote some attention to his proposals.

Gaston's Proposals

Though Gaston cannot find fault with the grammar or lexicography of the traditional translation, he prefers, on theological and irenic grounds, either of two other

¹See, e.g., Holladay, Lexicon s.v. "*hšb*."

²See e.g., Gen 38:15, 1 Sam 1:13 (both with the identical form *wyḥšbh*) "and he considered her to be (a given quality)"; also Job 13:24, 19:11, 33:10, etc.; all Niphal perfect and most Niphal imperfect forms and more.

³Gesenius-Kautzsch, Grammar, #117, 5 (c) [ii end].

⁴L. Gaston, "Abraham and the Righteousness of God," Horizons in Biblical Theology 2 (1980): 39-68.

⁵Cf. the bibliographical mention in influential works as, e.g., the article by J. Scharbert, "Gerechtigkeit: I. Altes Testament," in Krause-Müller, eds., Theologische Realenzyklopädie (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984).

possible renderings, which we consider here in turn.¹ We first examine each proposal from the viewpoint of grammar and vocabulary, then we review the evidence he offers from ancient texts. To judge from what both proposals have in common, Gaston's main concern is to show that the "righteousness" is God's and not Abraham's.

First proposal. Gaston argues that "the natural translation" would be:

"And he (Abraham) put his trust in YHWH,
and he (Abraham) counted it to him (YHWH) righteousness."²

The surrounding discussion makes clear that "it," for Gaston, refers to the "good news promised by God," i.e., offspring.³ Thus "Gen 15:1-6 is clearly about God and his promise, and not about Abraham and his faith," and the righteousness attributed to God by Abraham refers to

¹It is not clear whether this rendering is related to M. Buber's translation: "er aber vertraute IHM; das achtete er ihm als Bewährung." M. Buber and F. Rosenzweig, trans., Die fünf Bücher der Weisung (Heidelberg: L. Schneider, 1976), 1: 41. Gaston does not understand *sdqh* as "verification," but relates the "good news" to believing (HBT 2: 44). Buber arrived at that translation by making all derivatives of the *sdq* root correspond to derivatives of the German *wahr* word family. See his Zu einer neuen Verdeutschung der Schrift, Heidelberg: L. Schneider, 1976, p. 32.

²HBT 2: 41.

³HBT 2: 41 and 44.

His grace manifested in the covenantal relationship.¹

An attempted grammatical test of the proposal.
Sutherland has attempted a response. He concedes to Gaston that "the ambiguity inherent within the grammatical structure of the verse excludes dogmatism in understanding the 'original meaning.'" Nevertheless, he argues, on the basis of the "grammatical context," that "Yahweh is the subject" of the accrediting action in vs. 6 as well as the subject of the verbs in vs. 5.² If Sutherland means that a subject must be considered to be the same as the previous subject if the verbal stem is also the same, I cannot agree. The use of the Hiphil stem is determined by the particular lexical sense needed, not by agreement with other verbs in the surrounding context. In some cases (as here 'mn, nbṭ), there is just no Qal stem available for finite forms.

Furthermore, Sutherland lumps together the grammar of vss. 5 and 6 on the grounds that Hiphil forms appear in each, and then argues that since in verse 5 "Yahweh is the subject, that is, the causal agent of the action" and Abraham is alluded by means of the suffixes, the same obtains for wayyahš*behâ in 6b, which is linked by a waw

¹HBT 2: 44.

²D. D. Sutherland, "Genesis 15:6: A Study in Ancient Jewish and Christian Interpretation," Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982, pp. 28-29.

consecutive to a Hiphil in 6a.

He is apparently unaware that this weak chain breaks down precisely at the alleged connecting link between the verses, the Hiphil form *w^ehe'^emin* in 6a (the verb in 6b is not a Hiphil).¹ For in *w^ehe'^emin*, Yahweh is certainly not the subject nor the causal agent of the action, since He is specified as a complement of the verb. Thus there is nothing that "begins in verse 5," as he says implying that it continues in vs. 6, and possesses those characteristics (being Hiphil and having God as subject). Moreover, if the "grammatical context" of Hiphil forms in 15:5,6 did not preclude the subject "Abraham" for the Hiphil form in 6a, neither can it preclude the same subject for the Qal form in 6b.

Sutherland's effort seems misguided. Gaston's first proposal requires exactly the same grammatical analysis for 6b as the traditional translation.² Thus the

¹Qal forms of *prima h-* verbs share with Hiphil the *patah* preformative (see Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Grammar*, # 63, 2 (a) [c]); but no Hiphil forms are attested for *h^sb* (see, e.g., Holladay, *Lexicon*, s.v., esp. listing of Qal forms). "Gaston asks for consistency in translating verse 6. Yet his translation does not accomplish this any more than the traditional rendering. In order to claim a consistency in subject, Gaston becomes inconsistent with regard to object. The grammatical context makes the traditional reading more probable." Sutherland, "Genesis 15:6," pp. 28-9.

²We still have one subject (Abraham) taking one reality (first accusative, "it") for another (second accusative, "righteousness") as regards to a second person (Yahweh). They differ mainly in the identification of the persons involved, which merely exchange places when we go from one translation to the next.

real difficulty is not the "ambiguity inherent within the grammatical structure of the verse,"¹ since both interpretive options share the same grammatical structure.²

A contextual response. The appropriate field for such a test seems to me to reside in context and structural analysis. Gaston's first proposal requires a different identification for the antecedent of the -h suffix on the verb. The traditional translation takes this to refer to Abraham's believing attitude (15:6a), while those who make Abraham the subject of the verb in 15:6b must consequently regard the suffix as a reference to an activity of God, usually His promise of an heir for Abraham.

But from that already seen, in the section on structure and context, the concluding events in the promisory dialogues of Gen 15 must be interpreted in the light of the opening self-revelations (15:1 and 15:7).³

In 15:1 God has revealed Himself to Abraham as his Suzerain and invited the patriarch to trust in Him as his

¹Sutherland, "Gen 15:6," p. 28.

²Grammar can hardly help us to decide between alternatives in such a case, but this is by no means to suggest that all points in Sutherland's effort are invalid. In particular, the often-made observation that the pronominal suffixes in 15:4,5 point to Abraham as passive object, (found, e.g., in Schmid, EvTh 40: 400: "Wieder kommt Abraham in den Pronominalsuffixen von V.4 und 5 vor, doch auch hier spielt er keine aktive Rolle") and not as subject, carries some weight.

³More on this below, under theological ideas in their covenantal setting.

faithful Protector and munificent Provider. Abraham had questions about the significance of those promises in the absence of offspring, but once this matter was cleared up, he fully accepted the covenantal offer and trusted in the person of Yahweh. Against such background, the idea that this solemn act was followed by a patriarchal estimation of the offspring promise as constituting Yahweh's righteousness is decidedly anti-climactic. Thus a contextual test results in an a negative outcome.

A terminological test. In this section of the research one should subject Gaston's first proposal also to an auxiliary test on terminology.¹ In spite of the richness of vocabulary and poetic expressions associated with praise in the Psalter, not once is **hšb** used in a doxological context in the entire Hebrew Bible.² This

¹Gaston himself has identified difficulties in this area. When drawing an analogy from the Psalm genre "individual lament" to argue that the last words of Gen 15:1-6 must be understood as a "praise of God" by means of an ascription of righteousness to Him, Gaston notes:

"The major difficulty in such a suggestion is that the verb "count" is never otherwise used with God's righteousness as the object. As the verbs that are used are varied, however, and "count" is broad enough that it certainly could be used in this sense, we shall so understand it in the absence of arguments to the contrary" **HB** 2: 46.

But those arguments are not hard to find, as the present discussion shows.

²Occurrences of **hšb** in the Psalms are limited to 10:2; 21:12[11]; 140:3[2],5[4] (Qal Perf); 32:2; 35:20; 36:5[4]; 40:18[17]; 41:8[7]; 52:4[2] (Qal Imperf); 35:4 (Qal Ptcp); 44:23[22]; 88:5[4]; 106:31 (Niph); 73:16; 144:3 (Piel). Most of these refer to the wicked thinking up mischief against the Psalm authors; the rest (except for special cases analyzed in the present discussion) deal with

makes a doxology at the present place in the Pentateuch through those words extremely unlikely.

Furthermore, if one decides to employ not only the verb as the unit for linguistic research but also its predicate, the results are even more negative. As Gaston himself notes, the only other place where *ḥšb* is associated with *š'ḏāqāh*, Ps 106:31, "clearly understands the righteousness to be counted not to God but to Phinehas:"¹

They provoked the Lord to anger by their wicked deeds
and a plague broke out among them.
But Phinehas stood up and intervened,
and the plague was checked.
This was credited to him as righteousness
for endless generations to come. (29-31)

Indeed, the association, in the same context, of 'mn Hiph, *ḥšb* and *š'ḏāqāh* shows that it is an echo of Gen 15:6 as traditionally understood. In other words, it is Phinehas' faith, translated into action, and not God's promise that which is credited as righteousness.

Moreover, if one examines the alternatives involved in a process of "crediting righteousness," the unlikelihood of attributing it to Abraham increases. The verb under consideration designates in this context an intellectual process which culminates in ascribing uprightness to an individual. Depending on the individual and the behavior under consideration, the outcome of this intellectual

people reflecting on life, and God evaluating man or caring for him. Thus no reference is doxological.

¹HBT 2: 42.

process could also be the opposite of uprightness, fault or guilt.

For this opposite outcome, we have more instances of the employment of *hšb* in the Hebrew Bible: 2 Sam 19:20[19], Lev 17:4, and Ps 32:2. What these four references have in common is that they envision a judicial decision by an authority: either by God (Ps 106:31, 32:2),¹ the king (2 Sam 19:20),² or the community of Israel (Lev 17:4).³ Those are, in fact, the highest authorities the OT knows.

Thus we should set store by the fact that all other instances of the employment of *hšb* with an object designating the moral status of an individual involve the judgment of a higher authority upon a submissive subject.

Therefore, the idea of Abraham "counting God as righteous," far from being doxological, could have been startling to the ancients, as implying that a mere man was

¹ Davids, James, p. 127, appropriately notes that "there is some judicial tone in any declaration of standing by the 'judge of all the earth'," even though the primary emphasis is on moral rather than forensic evaluation.

² Shimei pleads with David to be pardoned for his previous curse on the king: "May my lord not hold me ('*al-yahššab li*) guilty ('*âwon*). He is, therefore, envisioning a decision with juridical effects.

³ Any resident of the Israelite camp who dared to sacrifice an animal by himself and not "in front of the tabernacle of the Lord--that man shall be considered guilty of bloodshed (*dâm yehaššêb*)." The judicial import is thus definite.

sitting in judgment over God (cf. Rom 9:20f).¹ This again establishes the unlikelihood of Gaston's first proposal.

Ancient support. To ameliorate his position, Gaston appeals to Neh 9:7-8:

You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.

This "you are righteous," according to Gaston, would be an echo of Abraham's counting God as righteous in Gen 15:6.² Gaston is undoubtedly right in asserting that this text in Nehemiah depends on Gen 15.³ But the expression "you are righteous" is much more likely to be a

¹When the Bible approximates sentiments as those proposed by Gaston for Gen 15:6, as it does in Job 36:3, the terminology involved (ntn + sedeq, "concede justice") underlines that man merely confesses or recognizes what he has no right to decide or determine.

²HBT 2: 49.

³Not only is there the same terminology as in Gen 15:18 about the promise of the land and the covenant, but also the faithful (n'mn, from the root 'mn) heart of Abraham is a clear allusion to Gen 15:6a.

doxological confession of the liturgical author,¹ independent from the Genesis text.

This may be inferred from the greater significance of fulfillment over mere promises in thanksgiving. The statement "you have kept your promise" clearly refers to the fact that Abraham's offspring did receive the promised land--an act of God accomplished, in the eyes of this liturgical author, through the events described from Exodus on, not in Genesis. Thus "you are righteous" represents the confession of the liturgist about the Gen 15 promise faithfully fulfilled in later times, not merely a restatement of Abraham's evaluation of that promise at the time when it was given.

Moreover, even if Gaston's contention that Abraham is the subject of the *hšb* action were acceptable, this still would not prove that the "righteousness" must be referred to God.²

¹The penitential liturgy of Neh 9:5-37 is structured around a recital of God's powerful acts in Israel's history, much like Ps 78, 105 or 106 (Brown, Fitzmyer and Murphy, eds., Jerome Commentary, p. 437). "You (did such and such at such and such time)" is either spelled out ('attâh) or implied in the verbal form ("Thou" appears 37 times in the KJV of this passage). These statements about God's acts, then, constitute the beads which are threaded together in this liturgical prayer. The sentence "You have kept your promise, because you are righteous (šaddiq 'attâh)" constitutes a new bead in the series.

²Cazelles (RB 69: 333) has discussed, though without adopting with finality, the possibility that the patriarch, "réfléchissant sur l'événement (suffixe [-h]), sa foi oriente ses plans vers Dieu (lô) pour avoir la

We have thus found that Gaston's first proposal is objectionable from the viewpoint of context and vocabulary, and unsupported by the evidence he provides.

Gaston's second proposal. Aware of several difficulties in his first proposal, including the lack of ancient support for his interpretation,¹ Gaston developed a second one, which he also sees reflected in ancient interpretations. He kept God in it as the subject of wayyahš*behâ, but the "righteousness" is still His and not Abraham's:

The sense would then be not that God says, "Good for you, Abraham; I call that righteousness," but rather: "Good for you, Abraham; you have some righteousness coming to you, which I shall exercise on a later occasion."²

A grammatical test. The second proposal of Gaston does require a different grammatico-syntactical analysis of Gen 15:6b, and thus it can be tested on grammar and syntax. In this case the subject (God) takes into account (hšb)³ "it" (-h, the believing attitude of 15:6a) for future

justice, c'est-à-dire l'accord avec la divinité, la réussite et la prospérité qui en découlent."

Just as Gaston obtains the idea that God is doing righteousness to Abraham with any subject for hšb, Cazelles has shown that it is possible to obtain the idea that the righteousness is Abraham's, whatever the subject of the verb.

¹He does not refer to the single document that may support his position, the STg.

²HBT 2: 51.

³Following a sense of hšb that differs from "taking us."

"doing righteousness" (שֵׁׁ דָאֻקָּה) to him (לֹה).¹ In this way the verb does not have two objects, but a single one, represented by its pronominal suffix. As for שֵׁׁ דָאֻקָּה, no longer an object, it now represents a subordinate clause of purpose: "[for] righteousness [that I will do]." But therein resides the difficulty.

The question is whether a single noun, sheer and unaccompanied by prepositions, conjunctions, or pronouns, can be taken for such a clause by itself.² Standard grammars do not mention such ultra-compact purpose clauses,³ and indeed they seem very unlikely.⁴

This is all the more so in view of the well-documented double-object capacity of the הָשָׁב verb.⁵ In the

¹Or, alternatively, "it" was taken into account "to him" (לֹה) for future "doing righteousness." Gaston does not discuss this grammatical point, which in any case does not materially affect interpretation.

²Ps 106:30[31] could conceivably be understood in such an elliptical way, as Nahmanides, cited by Gaston, actually did. But in the Psalm the reading is לִישֵׁׁ דָאֻקָּה, where the preposition ל- could be taken as a signal of the purposive character of the expression. In Gen 15:6, however, we have no similar clues.

³See Gesenius-Kautzsch, Grammar, # 165.

⁴In any case Gaston does not provide evidence for their existence in the language.

⁵See above, at the beginning of this section. Even if single-word purpose clauses existed in the language, since native speakers also used this verb with two unmarked grammatical objects, they could hardly fail to notice the drastically different meaning of the alternatives that this locution would have made equally possible. Therefore, they probably would have avoided ambiguity through another turn of expression.

event that the author meant a purpose clause, an alternative unambiguous construction was readily available to him requiring minimally 1- in front of the noun. Its absence from the text argues against Gaston's second proposal.

Ancient support. Leaving grammar aside, one should now consider the evidence he provides from ancient interpreters. Gaston appeals to Jas 2:21-23, and would have us to understand that according to James "righteousness was promised to Abraham when he believed (Gen 15) and was 'counted to' Abraham when God spared Isaac."¹ Thus the "righteousness" involved would be the righteous (or charitable) act of God in sparing Isaac.

But this way of reading James ignores the close concatenation of the verses.² The *dikaiosyne* ("righteousness") that James has in mind in 2:23 cannot be any righteous act of God towards Abraham, but only that *dikaiosyne* with which Abraham *edikaiôthe* ("was shown to be righteous") in 2:21.³

¹HBT 2: 51.

²In Jas 2:23 the quotation from Gen 15:6 is specifically meant to prove the close cooperation of works and faith (2:22, a verse that Gaston skips in his discussion), which James wants us to "see" in Gen 22 (Jas 2:21), when Abraham was "shown to be righteous" (*edikaiôthe*) through his work of the *ʿAqedah* (as implied in the "Now I know" formula of Gen 22:12).

³For a "demonstrative" rather than a "declarative" of *dikaioô* here, see O. Palmer Robertson, "Genesis 15:6: New Covenant Expositions of an Old Covenant Text," Westminster Theological Journal 42 (1979-80): 286 ff.

Besides, it is by no means sure that one should understand the "fulfilment" of Scripture mentioned in 2:23 as the execution of a "promise" seen by James in Gen 15:6.¹ As in other writings, here Gen 15:6 is seen "as a type of timeless sentence written over the life of Abraham."² Thus, Gen 22 is for James not a case of God executing a previous plan to do righteousness to Abraham, but another manifestation of the principle that faith manifests itself in righteous deeds.

Gaston next quotes some second-Temple period texts to the effect that God responded to Abraham's faith with the "oath" or covenant between the pieces,³ with strength for procreation⁴ or other blessings. None of these passages, however, relates the blessings to "righteousness" on the part of God, or in fact even mentions "righteousness" at all. The issue is not whether the ancients

¹"This is typical of the midrashic method: A primary event or text is cited [here Gen 22], the text is discussed, and then a secondary text [here Gen 15] is added to the discussion. Thus it would be incorrect to see *eplêrôthe* ["it was fulfilled"] simply functioning in the form of prophecy-fulfilment, but rather in the sense that the scripture in Gn. 15:6 says the same thing that James has been arguing." Davids, James, p. 129. James argues that Abraham's faith was manifest in the events of Gen 22, though only together with, or by means of, works, and thus is how Gen 15:6, which links faith to righteousness, "became true" in that experience.

²Ibid.

³Philo, Abr 273; Sir 44:19-21.

⁴Heb 11:11.

believed that God reacted to Abraham's faith with blessings (there is no doubt that they did), but whether they understood that Gen 15:6b states that God promised to so react. The texts quoted do not imply such an understanding. Thus there is no clear evidence from those ancient texts in favor of Gaston's second proposal.¹

Thus to argue that this was not only possible as the original meaning but also the way in which ancient versions understood the passage seems especially unlikely.

The second proposal, therefore, seems even more problematic on grammatical grounds and equally unsupported by his evidence.

The proposal of Oeming

Another scholar who has presented an interpretation similar to Gaston's first proposal is Oeming, in a later but apparently unrelated article.² His concern is to show that hšb cannot automatically be assumed to represent a terminus technicus for priestly imputation, though Oeming

¹It is true, as he points out, that this understanding may be found in Rabbinical Midrash (Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Bešallah 4, J. Z. Lauterbach, ed., Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1: 220). But, as seen above in this chapter under 'nky mgn lk, Rabbis often derived additional meaning from a Bible verse from somewhat strained vocalizations and grammatical constructions, without thereby implying that such was the peshat (plain sense) of the passage.

²M. Oeming, ZAW 95: 182-97. He does not refer to Gaston's work.

admits that it is so employed in the Niphal sometimes.¹

The argument from literary structure. One of his arguments for making of Abraham the subject of the verb in 15:6b is literary structure (*parallelismus membrorum*). However, in Gen 15:1-6 a clear parallelism of verse halves, whether synonymous, synthetic, or otherwise, is not clearly in evidence. Both editions of the Biblia Hebraica, accordingly, do not divide the texts in stychs. As seen before, dialogue and prose narrative, rather than poetry, are the recognized basic literary forms here.² But Oeming also appeals to other arguments which we must consider in the present section, with the help of other scholars who have reacted to his interpretation.

The argument from verbal form. Oeming sets much store by the tense change from consecutive imperfect (*wayyôšê'*, *wayyo'mer* 15:5) to consecutive perfect in 15:6a (*w'he'e'min*):

Es handelt sich also um ein frequentatives Perfekt. Dieses Tempus bildet gleichsam ein Zwischenglied zwischen Erzählung und Zustandsbeschreibung, zwischen Tun und Sein.³

¹Wenham, Genesis, p. 330, notes that Oeming's case against the connection with the cultic usage is weakened by the frequency of the Niphal form within the Pentateuch.

²See above under context and structure.

³ZAW 95: 190. Oeming blames on the Greek translators three divergences from the original Hebrew: 1) "ist das hebräische perfectum consecutivum zum Aorist geworden und damit der frequentativ-durative Aspekt des Glaubens verschwunden (angemessener wäre das Griechische Imperfekt gewesen)." However, Cazelles, RB 69: 332-3, notes that

The reason for this parsing has been clearly seen by Bo Johnson:

To Oeming it is important that this form is understood as a frequentative one. If Abraham's act of faith is taken as something that happens at a certain moment, it seems easier to interpret this event as the basis of the following reckoning from the the Lord's side, as is the case with the Septuagint.¹

The frequentative understanding of the Perfect assumes that the conjunction *w*^e has here the energetic sense of the Arabic *fa*.² But this is not the only possibility.

The *w*^eqatal forms (to which *w*^ehe'^emin belongs)

"personne ne voit dans ce *wehe'emin* un parfait convertit qui dépendrait du *wayyômer* précédent"; instead, the *waw* is uniformly taken as conjunctive, not consecutive (Oeming does not support his statement). Also, the Greek imperfect can hardly be a better translation: a complexive aorist corresponds to his idea of the meaning just as well (Blass-Debrunner, # 332) and its replacement by an imperfect leads to the impression that Abraham ceased to believe at a later date. 2) "zum logischen Subjekt des hier passivisch verwendeten *logizesthai* (*elogisthe*) ist *theos* geworden." This depends on a previous decision about which the "logical subject" truly is. Most ancient and modern interpreters would say that God was kept as, not that he became, the logical subject. 3) Oeming claims that the Greek *logizesthai* introduces forensic thoughts alien to the original. Again, this prejudices the issue.

¹Bo Johnson, "Who Reckoned Righteousness to Whom?" Svensk Exegetisk Arsbok 51-52 (1986-7): 110.

²P. Joüon, Grammaire de l'Hébreu Biblique (Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1947), section # 115, pp. 312 ff. Gesenius-Kautzsch, Grammar, # 49 f, p. 134, accepts this distinction between a Hebrew *wa* equivalent to Arabic *fa*, and a Hebrew *w*^e which may in some cases correspond to a form known "in Arabic as the ordinary copula (*wa*). On the Arabic *fa*, see also H. Fleisch, "Sur le système verbal du sémitique commun et son évolution dans les langues sémitiques anciennes," in Mélanges de l'Université Saint Joseph 27 (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1947-8), fasc. 3, pp. 55-57.

distinguish, "quand les lois phonétiques le permettent,"¹ between this energetic sense and another, purely coordinational or copulative, equivalent to Arabic *wa*.

The distinction is attained through the shift in the tone from the penultima to the ultima for the energetic *w^e*, while it stays on the penultima for the merely copulative.² However, in the *w^eqatal* forms without a postformative (as in the 3d singular, which is the present case), "la différence entre le *et de* de coordination et le *et de* finalité-consecution n'apparaît pas dans la forme."³ In the translation I take the conjunction in *w^ehe'^emin* to be merely copulative.

Johnson, however, prefers to see here the energetic but consecutive, not frequentative, sense:

. . . the common consecutive meaning, the perfect with its "and" following up what has been said immediately, and indicating it as a consequence of the preceding act or event.⁴

Such sense can indeed be supported from the grammarians:

Comme *wayyiqtol*, *w^eqatalti* exprime parfois une **consécution** (logique): Gn 20, 11 "Peut-être n'y a-t-il point ici de crainte de Dieu, et (donc) ils ~~me~~ tueront

¹Ibid., p. 313.

²Ibid., pp. 313-4; Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Grammar*, # 49 h, p. 135. For a contrary view, see L. McFall, *The Enigma of the Hebrew Verbal System* (Sheffield: Almond, 1982), pp. 193-4.

³Jollon, *Grammaire*, pp. 314.

⁴SEA 51-2: 110f.

(wah^a rāgāni).¹

In context, this would yield the translation "So he believed [in] the Lord,"² very close to the traditional understanding. But, as Johnson notes, "on the other hand, the acceptance of the perfect as frequentative does not necessarily support Oeming's view."³ One could still understand: "And Abraham kept on believing in the Lord, and he reckoned that fact to him as righteousness."

The work of Johnson shows that no matter which route we take in parsing, whether identifying the waw as simply copulative or energetic, and in the latter case whether identifying the perfect as consecutive or frequentative, the interpretation of Oeming does not necessarily follow.

The matter of the verbal suffix. About the verbal suffix on wayyah^s*behâ, Oeming thinks that "bezieht sich . . . auf die ganze Erzählung von der Sohnes-und Nachkommensverheissung der Verse 1-5."⁴ Johnson notes:

This seems to be a weak point in the argument. If it is taken for granted that Abraham is the acting subject in the entire verse, "it" can hardly refer to Abraham's faith. But if the question is left open, it seems more likely that the suffix should refer to the first fitting word in the preceding context, rather

¹p. Joüon, Grammaire de l'Hebreu Biblique (Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1947), # 119 e, p. 328.

²SEA 51-2: 115.

³Ibid., p. 111.

⁴ZAW 95: 192.

than to the whole narrative in the previous verses.¹

Since it is then an act of Abraham, not of God, which is taken as grounds for the accreditation of righteousness, it follows that the One doing the accreditation must be God. To the same conclusion points the fact that "the Divine name is mentioned immediately before the verb [wyhšbh]. In Hebrew grammatical practice this is reason enough to see the Lord as subject."²

Johnson also notes that without the suffix, it would be easier to understand Abraham as the acting subject throughout the entire verse. Its presence produces a distraction, "which makes the listener or reader feel impelled to stop and identify the significance of 'it.'"³ This, Johnson feels, was deliberate--and so was, therefore, the exclusion of Abraham as the subject.

The argument from consistency in subject. As for the unannounced shift in grammatical subject objected to by Oeming, Johnson points out that "there are no grammatical equivalents to 'the former' and 'the latter'" in Hebrew, and

If it is clear from the context to whom a verb refers, no more indicators are necessary, and a sudden shift of person is not taken as disturbing.

In Gen 15:6 there are such indicators: first the consecutive perfect within a series of narrative

¹SEA 51-2: 113.

²Ibid.

³SEA 51-2: 114.

consecutive imperfects, then the suffix "it" connected to the verb "reckon," and finally the shift back to a narrative consecutive imperfect in the second half of the verse.¹

Other authorities, too, could be cited to the effect that "le changement implicite de sujet n'est pas inouï en hébreu," and to review similarly constructed sentences elsewhere in the Bible in opposition to Oeming's conclusions.²

Theological arguments. Oeming also includes a section on the plausibility of שׁדָּאָה as God's iustitia salutifera [sic],³ but since the Pentateuch contains evidence for שׁדָּאָה as man's integrity (as in Gen 18:19; 30:33, Deut 9:4-6 or 24:13), the latter is equally plausible. All Pentateuchal occurrences of שׁדָּאָה (including the remaining two, Deut 6:25; 33:21) are consistent with such a sense. Indeed, Wenham is able to state that within these books the term "always applies to human activity."⁴

These scholars provide, therefore, a challenging rejoinder to most of Oeming's arguments, in defense of the traditional translation: "So he believed the Lord, and he reckoned it to him as righteousness."

Ancient support. Beyond this rejoinder, however, a

¹SEA 51-2: 115.

²RB 69: 333-4.

³ZAW 95: 194; probably a misprint for salutifera.

⁴Genesis, p. 330.

dialogue with Oeming must continue here. This is because he anticipates, to a certain extent, one objection I made to Gaston: "Man wird einwenden, *hšb* sei nicht als eine Tätigkeit des Menschen in bezug auf Gott denkbar."¹ He answers that one is not forced to understand *hšb* as "reckon," but more generally "consider, take for" (granted here), that the precise syntactical conformation of this sentence is unique (also granted by the opposite view)² and finally, that both the Bible and the Talmud use *hšb* for a human activity in regards to God. This latter counterargument requires a closer look here.

Oeming's evidence is, for the Bible, limited to Mal 3:16: "A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored (*ûl*-hošbêy*) his name."³ The evidence of the Talmud is equally limited to one passage, *bBerakoth* 14a: "Samuel interpreted: How come you to esteem (*hšbtw*) this man and not God?"⁴

The verb, however, is used in these passages in a

¹ZAW 95: 191.

²The uniqueness is true if one considers both the double accusative for this specific verb and the 1- dative of personal interest; I have also employed the same analysis, so Oeming's observation does not apply to the case under consideration.

³This and all following English renderings of Bible verses, unless otherwise credited, belong to NIV.

⁴Soncino edition.

sense that differs from the one required by Gen 15:6.¹ It may mean in them "achten," as Oeming argues, but not "etwas jemandem als etwas achten," as Oeming himself defines the required sense for Gen 15:6.² In other words, the verb may be taken as "regard" in the sense of "having in high regard," but not "regard something as something else for someone." Undoubtedly, there is no disrespect in "esteeming" or "honoring" God, but the issue here is whether the same is valid for "regarding something in God as righteousness."

Besides, in none of the quoted Bible and Talmud texts is a double accusative employed, which determines the sense "consider, take for." Even more important, in no case is a moral quality (as "righteousness" or "guilt") the object. Therefore, the objection that whenever הִשָּׁב has a moral quality for its object, the subject is a higher authority, and, therefore, not Abraham in Gen 15:6 still stands.

Thus a grammatical and syntactical examination of the passage confirms the results of the contextual study, and provides reasons for not departing from the traditional translation of Gen 15:6b.

¹The English renderings of the texts here, taken from widely used editions, have probably already alerted the reader to these facts.

²ZAW 95: 191.

Proposed translation

6. So Abram put his trust in Yahweh, and He considered that as uprightness on his part.

Synopsis of the Proposed
Translation of 15:1-6

For ease of reference I gather here the translations proposed in this section of the chapter:

1. After these events, the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a revelation, in these terms:

"Do not be afraid, Abram:
I am your Protector.
Your reward will be very great."

2. But Abram said:

"My Lord Yahweh, what will you give me, since I depart barren, and the chief dependent in my household is the Damascus citizen Eliezer?"

3. And Abram said:

"Note that you have given me no offspring, and notice that a household dependent is the one who will succeed me."

4. And then the word of Yahweh came to him in these terms:

"No such one will succeed you, but it is one coming from your own body who will succeed you."

5. He took him outdoors and said:

"Contemplate the skies and enumerate the stars, if you are able to tally them."

Then he told him:

"So shall your offspring be."

6. So Abram put his trust in Yahweh, and He considered that as uprightness on his part.

Echoes and Parallels within
the Old Testament

A section of this kind seems appropriate in an exegesis that aims to be compared with the work of ancient interpreters. The latter, as said before, were often guided by "canonical exegesis."

In this section the unit is related, on the basis of its distinctive expressions, to other passages in the Old Testament. By "distinctive" I mean to exclude commonplace expressions or those with a locus classicus elsewhere in the Abrahamic narratives. Some distinctive relationships already covered when dealing with lexical content, e.g., "after these events" ['aḥar hadd*barim hâ'êlleh], "in a revelation" [bammah*zeh], "barren" [c*riri], or "succeed" [yrš] are here obviated.

Expressions which are not distinctive but are theologically important, are reserved for a later section. Such is, for instance, the "word of the Lord." Similarly, the "seed" of Abraham, a nation numerous as the "stars" and heir to the land, appears both in a prior and more developed form in other Abrahamic narratives (12:1-3, 7; 13:14-18; 17:6-8; 22:16-18) and therefore its study does not belong here. This is not the case, however, for the related phrase "one coming from your own body."

Direct references or even allusions to distinctive elements of the unit, including an explicit mention of Abraham, are rare in the OT. This is due to the fact that,

often, Bible authors refer to several passages dealing with the same topic simultaneously, having them thereby lose their individual relief. We presently compare the few direct references by themselves first, and next in the light of less explicit references or passages with the same sequence of ideas. When not exhausting the references, the particular choice for discussion is explained *in situ*.

Discussion

Do not be afraid

The opening injunction of the oracle, "Do not be afraid ('al--tira')" is repeated to Isaac with explicit reference to Abraham in Gen 26:23-24. No other passage associates this phrase with Gen 15:1-6 so explicitly:

From there he went up to Beersheba. That night the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.

Among common points, notice: (1) common language: besides 'al--tira', 'ânokî, rbh Hiph, zar^cakâ; (2) the repeated reference to Abraham; (3) this, as 15:1-6, is a nocturnal apparition of God to the patriarch opening with a self-predication of God; (4) as in Gen 15:1, such promissory oracle also came in a respite from stressful events. Isaac had been repeatedly fighting the "herdsmen of Gerar" over watering rights, but he has presently dug the well of Rehoboth and named it so because "now the Lord has given us room and we will flourish in the land" (26:22). Thus, the

similarity in the setting confirms the reference to 15:1.

God's self-predication "I am the God of your father Abraham" has, in the light of 17:7,¹ explicit reference to the substance clause of his suzerain-vassal covenant with Abraham. Such vassal status and its appertaining privileges are emphasized in the expression "for the sake of Abraham my servant ('abdi)." Thus this passage has the character of a confirmation of covenantal promises (including those of 15:1) to Isaac as the legitimate successor.

The motives for "fear" are equally indeterminate in both passages. This is not merely coincidental. While obvious motives for fear clearly occur in the context immediately preceding 'al--tira' in certain passages,² this is not the case in another group of references. The list of the latter, headed by Gen 15:1, continues with the present passage dominated by a flourishing Isaac, Jacob's joyful march to Egypt in 46:3, the comforting Servant songs in Isa 41:10, 14; 43:1, 5, and Jeremiah's call to prophetic office (1:8). The context does not point to any immediate motive for fear.

¹See the study of the "core clause" concept by W. Vogels, La Promesse Royale de Yahweh Préparatoire a l'Alliance (Ottawa: St. Paul, 1970).

²Such as the danger of death by dehydration at Gen 21:17, the presence of the Egyptian army at Exod 14:13, the Syrian army at 2 Kgs 6:16, the Transjordanian coalition at 2 Chr 20:15-17, or the Syro-Israelite coalition at Isa 7:14.

All these latter "do not be afraid" passages have in common the generally optimistic atmosphere just remarked coupled with God's call to a special relationship with him (Jer 1:8), or its confirmation (to the Servant in Isaiah) or reiteration (to Abraham's immediate successors in Genesis). Thus, this "do not be afraid" expression should not be taken to imply immediate motives for fear in passages expressive of God's call.¹ This suggests that one should not look for concrete motives to be afraid in Gen 15:1.

I am your Protector

The noun *mgn* applied to God in association with Abraham, as in Gen 15:1, occurs elsewhere only in Ps 47:9(10):

The princes of the people are gathered together
even the people of the God of Abraham
for the shields of the earth belong unto God
[lê'lohim māginnēy-'ereṣ]:
He is greatly exalted. (KJV)

Where this classical English version renders "shields," rather obscurely, both ancient and recent versions equate *mgn* with "rulers" of one or another sort. The LXX already has *hoi krataioi* ("the mighty ones"). This

¹To be exhaustive, one should also discuss the less specific references to God's protection promised in his covenant with Abraham (Exod 2:14, Isa 29:22) and second-degree relationships through the associated "I am with you" of 26:24 (also connected with Abraham in Gen 28:13-15; 31:42, Isa 41:8-10). They will not be pursued here lest they take us far afield.

type of translation undoubtedly yields a better sense:

The nobles of the nations assemble
as the people of the God of Abraham,
for the kings of the earth belong to God,
he is greatly exalted. (NIV)

The princes of the nations assemble
with the families of Abraham's line;
for the mighty ones of earth belong to God,
and he is raised above them all. (NEB)¹

While the motive for abandoning the "shields" is contextual, the rationale for understanding "rulers" instead has often been that ~~mgny~~- might be a corruption of ~~sgny~~-,² "governors." But no such emendation is necessary to obtain the sense "rulers." As early as the 12th century,³ R. David Kimḥi noted: "māginnêy-'ereṣ: they are great men (hagg^e dolim) and kings, as in [Hos 4:18]: 'her rulers (māginnêyhâ) dearly love dishonor.'"⁴

Kimḥi's appeal to Hosea is particularly appropriate. Translators have always recognized this sense in Hos 4:18 even without recourse to emendations. Instances

¹our emphasis. The substantial difference, "families" instead of "the God of Abraham" is due to its following an unsupported conjecture, 'm 'hly instead of 'm 'lhy.

²Thus the apparatus in BHS; see also P. C. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, Word Biblical Commentaries (Waco: Word, 1983), p. 347.

³Kimḥi lived between 1160 and 1235 according to J. Baker and E. Nicholson, eds., The Longer Commentary of R. David Kimḥi on Psalms 120-150 (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), p. xi.

⁴S. I. Esterson, ed., "The Commentary of R. David Kimḥi on Psalms 42-72," Hebrew Union College Annual, 1935, p. 339.

include the Vulgate (*protectores eius*) and, closer to our times, the KJV itself ("her rulers"¹). Thus there is no need to remove the noun *mgn* from Ps 47:9 to arrive at overlordship as the idea of this part of the text.

Though better than "shields," the rendering of Ps 47:9 as "rulers" still offers a less than satisfactory translation. It does not help to understand what does Abraham have to do in a context like this, "a psalm of God's kingship,"² what is the character of such an assembly of rulers, or why are the hosts to such an assembly identified precisely as the "people of the God of Abraham."³ Moreover, if the overlords of all the earth really "belong to God" just as Israel does, why mention this "people of Abraham's God" as if a privileged relationship is implied?

The difficulties disappear as soon as we pay closer attention to other possibilities for the translation of the plural. Instead of a simple plural, it can be understood

¹I employed this form in translating Kimhi. His unpointed Hebrew text runs: ky l'lhym ybw'w mgnv 'rs: whm hgdlym whalkym, kmw: 'hbw hbw qlwn mgnyh. Esterson, HUCA 1935.

²Craigie, Ps 1-50, p. 346.

³This epithet is utilized in the confirmation of covenantal promises to Isaac and Jacob (Gen 26:24; 28:13), in the decisive intervention of Elijah at mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18:36), in Solomon's dedicatory prayer (1 Chr 29:18) and Hezekiah's Passover invitation (2 Chr 30:6). The solemnity of such occasions calls for an adequate explanation of the character of assembly presently being discussed.

as a *plurale majestatis*,¹ or more conservatively, a plural of abstraction. In this way *mgny*, "Protectorship, Suzerainty," built on the root *gnn*, can be morphologically compared to *m^egûrim* "residence," "the condition of a resident,"² built on *gwr*. Thus, a conservative translation of the last clauses could also be:

To God belongs the Suzerainty of the earth:
He is greatly exalted.

In any case, no matter whether we prefer one or another of these translations which discard "shields," *mgn* must be equated in Ps 47:9[10] with overlordship and this strengthens the conclusions of the former text-critical and lexical study for Gen 15:1.

The understanding of the plural as one of abstraction, however, has several advantages:

1. The former clause is no longer a statement about people, but about God himself. As such it enhances the synonymous parallelism with the last clause: "He is greatly exalted."

2. It agrees better with the repeated emphasis of this Psalm on God's kingship, especially in the last three verses.

¹So in Dahood, *Psalms*, 1: 287. He translated "God is Suzerain of the earth" parsing the l- that precedes the divine name as *lamedh emphaticum* instead of the preposition indicating possession ("belong to").

²See Holladay, *Lexicon*, s.v. *m^egûrim*, and Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Grammar*, sections # 124 d, f.

3. It explains why "the nobles of the nations assemble": it is to render feudal homage to the Suzerain of all the earth.

4. It also explains the reference to Abraham: God revealed Himself as "the Protector (i.e., Suzerain) of Abraham" in Gen 15:1.

5. The idea that the rulers of the nations "belong" to God, which in an unqualified statement may compromise Israel uniqueness as God's peculiar people, then disappears.

Accepting this understanding, now far from unique,¹ one may now turn to the privileged position of Israel. Whether the preposition "with" (‘im) should be read together with ‘am either by correcting an alleged haplography,² by seeing it as implicit in the idiom, or by substituting it for ‘am,³ or whether it should not be introduced at all,⁴ is a moot point. In any case the special reference to Abraham, and hence, to his seed, is clear enough.

¹See Calderone, Oracle and Treaty, p. 70. It is found even where "shields" is accepted. See, e.g., L. E. Toombs, "The Psalms" in C. M. Laymon, ed., The Interpreters' One-Volume Commentary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), p. 276: ". . .the king of the earth, to whom all world power (shields) belongs."

²See BHS, apparatus.

³See NEB above.

⁴Cf. NIV above.

The people of "Abraham's God" is the people of God's grant covenant according to its clause of substance: "to be your God and the God of your descendants after you" (Gen 17:7). Thus, though all "nobles of the nations" are recognized in this psalm as God's subjects, Abraham and his seed emerge in a special vassalship position in the light of such covenantal precedents in Genesis.

In this way the psalm actually illustrates how the Genesis narrative, 15:1-6 comprised, was employed in intra-Biblical exegesis to construct theological statements on Israel. This construction presupposes the same conception of God as Abraham's Suzerain as we arrived at by other means, and tends to confirm it.

Though no other references to God as Abraham's *mgn* are found in the O.T., the term *mgn* and several other key concepts of Gen 15:1-6 can be identified in two psalms without an explicit reference to the patriarch.

Ps 84:11-12 reads in NIV:

- a) For the Lord God is a sun and a shield [*mgn*];
- b) the Lord bestows favor and honor;
- c) no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is
[blameless.]
- d) O Lord Almighty,
- e) blessed is the man who trusts in you.

As far as the translation is concerned, it has been demonstrated that "sun" is the ancient Near East equivalent of "sovereign," and suggested that the rendering should

take this fact into account.¹ Thus a more fitting translation of the first lines might be:

For YHWH God is a Sovereign and Protector;
the Lord bestows favor and honor;
no good thing does he withhold . . . (etc.)

In this way, the reference (a) to God as a Suzerain is followed by (b) an allusion to rewards, (c) which the righteous receive abundantly, (e) as a consequence of their trust in him. Four of the key concepts of Gen 15:1-6 are thus found here in their proper order.

In a less ordered fashion, we meet the same associations again in a Davidic psalm, 2 Sam 22 (= Ps 18):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| (a) God as the Protector [mgn] of the king: | 31,36 |
| (b) Rewards for integrity [šedeq]: | 21-28 |
| (c) Trust in God | 31 |

Thus the relationship between God and the king and the suzerain-vassal relationship between God and Abraham have been assimilated to each other. The concept of the king as the vassal of Yahweh also appears in the Pss 2, 21, 86 and 110. These psalms are further evidence that the ideology manifested in Gen 15:1-6 permeated Israelite thought deeply, even in contexts where the patriarchal covenant was not explicitly alluded. This, too, confirms the covenantal understanding of Gen 15:1-6 here defended.

¹Dahood, Psalms, AB 16(1): 16-17; 17(2): 282-3, 316.

Your reward will be very great

References to a divine ~~sākār~~ in the OT are limited to 2 Chr 15:7, and Isa 40:10; 62:11. I discuss the latter, fuller references first.

After asking the heralds to proclaim "Here is your God" (Isa 40:9) throughout Judah, the prophet adds:

See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power,
and his arm rules for him.
See, his reward [~~sākār~~] is with him,
and his recompense accompanies him.

The last two lines of Isa 40:10 are identical in Isa 62:11, and the passage opens, as the latter, with a reference to God's manifestation: "See, your Savior comes." Therefore, both "reward" passages should be understood in the light of other Isaianic references to the apparition of God:

Surely this is our God;
we trusted in him, and he saved us.
This is the Lord, we trusted in him;
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation (25:9).

Be strong, do not fear;
your God will come,
he will come with vengeance;
with divine retribution
he will come to save you (35:4).

Therefore the "reward" mentioned in 40:10, 62:11 is the divine intervention ("salvation") to which Israel is entitled in virtue of the covenantal relationship with God, its Protector. Indeed, extensive research on this class of Isaianic passages has established that such intervention on the basis of the covenantal commitment is precisely their

point.¹ The relationship of these passages with Gen 15:1, in turn, suggests that in this unit we should understand the "reward" in a similar fashion, as the privileges of the covenantal relationship and in close connection with the promise of protection.²

The remaining parallel, 2 Chr 15:7, belongs to the divine message brought by Azariah, son of Oded, to king Asa. As Gen 15:1-6, the oracle comes immediately after a divinely aided victory over numerous enemies (1 Chr 14). It opens with a call to seek God (15:2), the consequences of which can be illustrated from antecedent history (3-6) and closes with the exhortation: "be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded [yêš šākār lip^eullat^kēm]" (15:7).

Here the associations with Isa 40:10 are particularly close: "be strong" (ḥizqû) recalls the

¹A. Schoors, I Am God Your Saviour. A Form-Critical Study of the Main Genres in Is. XL-LV, Vetus Testamentum Supplement 24 (Leiden: Brill, 1973) states in his general conclusion (p. 297) that "the central point of the prophet's message is salvation" and that the "nominal substantiation (I am God, etc.)" points to "an already existing relation between God and Israel."

²The relationship of this passage with Gen 15:1 has been perceived by the Targum on Isaiah, which translates: "Behold, the Lord God revealeth himself with strength and the strength of his mighty arm ruleth before him." J. F. Stenning, ed., The Targum of Isaiah (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949), pp. 132-2. The word for "strength," tqwp, translates mgn in the various Targumim to Gen 15:1, as seen in the former chapter. The same association of protective strength on the part of the Lord with his "reward" as in the latter passage is thus intimated.

particularly close: "be strong" (ḥizqû) recalls the empowering protection (ḥâzâq) envisioned in the Isaianic passage, and the "work" (p^ecullah) to be rewarded is the same term as the "recompense" in Isaiah. Since we saw the relationship of Isa 40:10 with Gen 15:1, these associations can be taken as indirect links with Genesis.

But there are also direct links, as in "do not give up," literally "let not your hands weaken," which recalls "do not be afraid," the victorious setting of the oracle and the implicit demand of loyalty to God in 2 Chr 15:2-6 (heeded, 2 Chr 15:8-18) which calls to mind the concern with trusting God in Gen 15:1, 6.

In the light of this contextual setting, centered on God's protection from enemies, and of the Isaianic parallels, the reward (šākâr) envisioned in 2 Chr 15:7 can hardly be any other than in Isaiah and Genesis, i.e., covenantal protection, and the same exegetical conclusion applies as in Isa 40:10; 62:11.

One coming from your own body

In spite of the numerous occurrences of the verb for "coming out" [yš'],¹ the expression in this form is quite distinctive. When both the subject and point of departure of the "coming out" are persons and no

¹According to the count of Even-Shoshan, Concordance, 1067 occurrences.

preposition other than "from" [min] intervenes,¹ the reference is either to birth from a woman (Gen 25:25-26, 38:28, Exod 21:22, Num 12:12) or to royal descentance through a male lineage (Gen 17:6; 35:11, 2 Sam 7:12, 2 Kgs 20:18 = Isa 39:7). This observation automatically assimilates Gen 15:4 to the latter category.

Indeed, the reference to a royal lineage is explicit in the reiteration of covenantal promises to Abraham in 17:6, "kings will come from you," and to Jacob in 35:11, "kings will come from your loins." An expression identical to the Gen 15:4 form [mimmê'eykâ] appears in the classical expression of the covenant of God with David, 2 Sam 7:12.

These royal associations in Gen 15:4 have sometimes been called

an anachronistic retrojection by these [Davidic court] circles concerned to correlate Abraham and David, and to see in David the fulfilment of a promise addressed to his prototype, Abraham.²

However, the former study suggests that the very idea of a suzerainty covenant places Abraham to some extent in an underlord capacity and thus as the founder of a "dynasty" of sorts, continued in the succession of

¹The idea "departing from" a person is expressed through a double preposition, lit. "from with."

²M. Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), as a possibility discussed in connection with the study of Clements, Abraham and David.

patriarchs. If so, no anachronism is necessarily involved. Be that as it may, the passages quoted clearly show that Biblical authors "connected the kingship with the Abrahamic covenant."¹ This confirms the covenantal character of the unit.

Abram put his trust in Yahweh

Abraham is explicitly remembered in connection with his trusting attitude (root 'mn) only in Neh 9:7-8:²

You are the Lord God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous.

The passage first recalls the election of Abraham (Gen 12) under the rare,³ but scriptural, name "Abram." This is immediately explained with a reference to the later change (Gen 17:5). Thus we may safely conclude that the author is thinking of the contents of the Abraham narratives preceding that point. That the prayer then turns to Gen 15 is evidenced by its summary of Gen 15:18-19. The

¹Clements, Abraham and David, p. 72.

²I already had occasion to reject Gaston's exegesis of this verse. The passage itself, however, is relevant (as there explained) and must be presently considered in its own right.

³Outside the Pentateuch it is found only in the passage presently under discussion and in 1 Chr 1:27.

complete text of the latter passage is here transcribed for comparison in the column at right:

Neh 9:8

you made a covenant with him
to give to his descendants

the land of the Canaanites,
Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites,
Jebusites and
Girgashites.

Gen 15:18

On that day the Lord
made a covenant with Abram
and said:
"To your descendants I give
this land, from the river
of Egypt to the great
river, the Euphrates,
the land of the Kenites,
Kenizzites, Kadmonites,
Hittites, Perizzites,
Rephaites, Amorites,
Canaanites,
Girgashites and Jebusites.

Immediately before this allusion comes the reference to Gen 15:1-6: "You found (māṣâ'tâ) his heart faithful to you." The verb mṣ' is found elsewhere associated with judgments on people. The grammatical conformation of Neh 9:8a (verb mṣ' + personal object + adjective) occurs in Eccl 7:26: "I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare." More pertinently, divine evaluations of the life and attitudes of persons appear in the set phrase "find grace in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8 and frequently afterwards) and in Ezek 28:15:

You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created
till wickedness was found (nimṣâ') in you.¹

Clearly, both the blamelessness of the ways (i.e., behavior) of the king of Tyre, and his wickedness, were

¹"Finding wickedness" (with ʿwn instead of ʿwlh) attributed to God appears, in a completely different context, also in Gen 44:16.

found in the course of divine evaluations on the latter's moral qualities. This may be compared to the judgment of God about the attitude of Abraham towards Him: "and He considered that as uprightness on his part."

Since **hšb** ("considering") is also used for this kind of moral evaluation, as previously seen,¹ and the ne'*mān heart of Neh 9:8a admittedly represents Abraham's trusting attitude in Gen 15:6a, God's "finding" this heart in Abraham constitutes in Neh 9:8 an equivalent to God's "considering" the faithful attitude of Abraham (he'*min) as righteousness in Gen 15:6b. Thus Neh 9:8 provides strong evidence for the traditional understanding of Gen 15:6, in which Abraham, not God, is evaluated.

He considered that as uprightness
on his part

Though the previous reference is the only explicit association of Abraham with the faith event of Gen 15:6 in the rest of the OT, we do find **hšb** associated with **š'ḏāqāh** in Ps 106:30-31:

But Phinehas stood up and intervened
and the plague was checked.
This was credited to him as righteousness [**wattêhāšeb**
lô liš'ḏāqāh]
for endless generations to come.

The relationship between Gen 15:6 and Ps 106:31 does not stop there. One of the main concerns of the psalm

¹See above under the lexical analysis of 15:6, on Ps 106:31; 32:2; 2 Sam 19:20; and Lev 17:4.

is to describe the history of Israel in terms of its inner reaction to God's acts, and the consequences of such inner attitudes is repeatedly expressed in terms of the Hiphil of 'mn.

This reaction to God's acts is polarized between belief and unbelief. Thus, right after the doxological introduction (1-5), the psalm begins a confession of national sin with the events previous to the exodus, when "our fathers...gave no thought to your miracles; they did not remember your many kindnesses, and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea" (106:7). But after God's saving act, "then they believed [wayya'°minû] his promises, and sang his praise" (106:12).

But the cycle of unbelief soon recommences: "they soon forgot what he had done, and did not wait for his counsel" (106:13). As a consequence came Kibroth-hattaavah and sundry other tragedies (14-23). The psalmist next reiterates the theme of unbelief: "then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe his word [lo' he'°minû liḏbarô]" (106:24). Such unbelief led to fresh failures, including Baal Peor (106:25-29). It is in the latter that Phinehas intervened.

Thus the psalm clearly contrasts the attitude of Phinehas with that of many of his contemporaries. They ignored the record of God's miraculous guidance, but Phinehas intervention implies that he did "believe [God']s

word." Therefore, to ḥšb and š^eḏāqāh we must add he'^emin in the list of links of this passage with Gen 15:6.

Still, we should ask ourselves why Phinehas particularly, but not Moses who is also mentioned in this psalm, or any other believer, is so associated with Gen 15:1-6. This can be answered only through the alluded narrative in the Pentateuch, Num 25:6-13.

When the grandson of Aaron, Phinehas, saw Zimri bringing a Midianite woman to camp, he "rose," "drove the spear through both of them" and so "the plague against the Israelites was stopped" (Num 25:8, cf. the same points in Ps 106:30-31).

Then God informed Moses: "I am making my covenant of peace with him. He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood [k^ehunat̄ 'ôlām], because he was so zealous for the honor of his God" (Num 25:12-13). The reference to this in Ps 106:31, "endless [l^e'ôlām] generations to come," is unmistakable.

Thus the zealous and, according to Ps 106, also believing attitude of Phinehas fulfills a precondition for God to bestow a covenant in which the priesthood is granted to the Aaronites. This in turn explains why Gen 15:1-6 was associated with this passage: the believing attitude of Abraham is also followed in the text by a covenant made extensive to his descendants of all times (15:7, 18 cf. 17:7, b^eriṭ̄ 'ôlām).

The theological reflection on the value of faith expressed in Gen 15:1-6 and Ps 106 is widespread in the OT.¹ In the face of such a massively documented OT doctrine, it is difficult to disagree with the conclusion that the narrator understands Abraham's attitude in Gen 15:6 as the "only right conduct toward God" and therefore as his *š·dāqāh*. This conclusion was reached in previous research on OT faith.² An identical viewpoint of the narrative, though not the same terminology, has also been found by an exegete in another Abraham story, namely Gen 22.³ Faith is here an important "actant" correlated with Gen 15:6.

¹It certainly underlies Ps 84:10-12, as well as 2 Sam 22:21-31, which concludes with a blessing for the man who trusts in Yahweh. Jehoshaphat spells out the consequences of such faith ('*mn* Hiph.) in 2 Chr 20:20 in a way clearly reminiscent of Exod 4:31 and 14:31. Isa 7:9 (cf. also 43:10) appeals to its etymology ("to be firm") to equate this kind of faith with security. But using a diverse term, such as *bṭh*, makes no discernable difference (cf. the parallelism of both in Ps 78:22): with either term the consequences are the same (2 Kgs 18:15, 1 Chr 5:20, Ps 21:6-7, Jer 39:18). By reason of these consequences such trust is commanded (Ps 4:6[5]; 9:11[10]; 37:3,5; 40:4[3]; 62:9[8]; 115:9-11, Prov 3:5; 22:19, Isa 26:4; 30:15; 50:10, Jer 49:11) and its blessed-ness extolled (Ps 32:10; 40:5[4]; 112:7; 125:1, Prov 14:26; 16:20; 28:25; 29:25, Jer 17:7).

²Jepsen, "'āman," in *TDOT* 1:292-323.

³G. Rouiller, "The Sacrifice of Isaac," in F. Bovon and G. Rouiller, eds., Exegesis: Problems of Method and Exercises in Reading (Gen 22 and Luke 15) (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1978), pp. 423-4, 431-2.

Summary and Conclusion

A direct reference to Abraham and the covenant established with him occurs in confirming the latter to Isaac (Gen 26:23-24) in an equivalent situation of relative prosperity. Identical expressions are found in similar settings. Thus no immediate motives for fear should be hypothesized in the case of Abraham.

Another echo, though obscured by some versions both of Genesis and the Psalms, can still be retrieved in Ps 47:9. The nobles of the nations must assemble to pay homage to the God of Abraham, whose special relationship with the Suzerain of all the earth they must acknowledge in his successors. This elucidation of the meaning confirms previous conclusions based on structure and historical setting.

A more distant parallel may be found in passages associated with the vassalship of the king. The terms in which this concept is elaborated link it to Gen 15:16 in Ps 18 (2 Sam 22) and also in Pss 2, 21, 86, and 110. The same blessings are made extensive to all those who walk in uprightness in Ps 84:11-12. This shows the extent of the influence of Gen 15:1-6 on Israelite reflection.

Echoes of the "reward" promised to Abraham may be found in Isa 40:10; 62:11. These and related Isaianic passages show that such reward should be connected with

God's saving intervention in the lives of his people. In their light, 2 Chr 15:7 contains a similar lesson.

A direct reference to Abraham's trusting attitude and its evaluation by God in the setting of the covenant occurs in Neh 9:7-8. Identical terminology and similar setting are provided for the evaluation of Phinehas which introduces a covenant of Aaronic priesthood in Ps 106:30-31. These passages belong to numerous group of texts that emphasize the salvific consequences of trusting God, some of them recognized by other researchers even in the Abrahamic narratives of Genesis itself.

In sum, a study of echoes and parallels within the OT suggests that the "fear" should not be connected with an immediate referent (Gen 26:23-24), for God's offer of "protection" actually was a call to enter a suzerainty covenant (Ps 47:9, Ps 106:30-31), prolonged in dynastic fashion (Gen 17:6; 35:11) and furnished with a "reward" consisting in God's saving interventions throughout history (Isa 40:10; 62:11, 2 Chr 15:2-6). They also show that Abraham, not God, was always understood as the one evaluated as righteous in Gen 15:6.

These intertextual relationships imply that the covenantal understanding of the passage and the role of Abraham as a recipient of righteousness in the oldest midrashic documents is the prolongation of a still more ancient intra-Biblical exegesis and reflection, and

substantially coincides with the one obtained from a structural, lexical, and historical study.

Theological Concepts in their
Covenantal Setting

The aim of this section is to determine the principal implications of the passage from the standpoint of ideas about the relationship between God and man. The key phrases of the unit, as viewed from this perspective, are identified as a first step, and then related to their historical setting in search of illumination.

The category of "promise dialogue" for the unit has been proposed above. The very idea of a dialogue between the Deity and the patriarch has theological relief since it concerns the area of Revelation. Thus one should pay attention to "the word of the Lord" that came to Abraham in a nocturnal "revelation."

As for the theological content of such revelation, since we are dealing with a dialogue, we can be guided in the identification of its key elements by the substance of the successive interventions of God and Abraham.

As already determined, in his opening "word" God offers Abraham a covenantal relationship in which He, as the Suzerain Lord, provides protection and generous reward. The offer of protection begins with a soothing invitation of the Deity for the patriarch to dismiss fears (15:1).

Thus we should next study the offer of divine protection in relationship to the possibility of human "fear."

This opening "word" also contains a promise of divine reward. Studies have already been quoted about the importance of the topic for theological reflection since earliest times.¹ Since this concept has been here related to covenant grants here, one should explore the possible theological implications of this connection. Given the intrinsic importance of the topic its treatment here is longer than other sections.

In his first intervention Abraham requests clarification of the significance of those covenantal privileges in the face of childlessness (2,3). God accedes to the request, announcing the cessation of childlessness and, with the aid of an astronomical illustration, numerous further descendance (4,5). Thus both interventions center on the idea of offspring or "seed." This pregnant conception so rich in Biblical associations is certainly one of the key theological topics of the passage.

We have also seen that once the matter has been cleared up, Abraham accepts the relationship with a trusting attitude, and is in turn accepted by God as an upright vassal. Thus the text itself poses the theological question of the relationship between trust and acceptance as a righteous person. In the light of previous findings,

¹See "Problem Selection" in the Introduction.

this should be studied in connection with the Suzerain-vassal relationship.

In turning to the suzerainty covenants as the natural setting for the passage we enter a well-studied and promising field:

No area of the Near Eastern background of the Hebrew Bible has been more discussed in recent years than the international treaty . . . If genuine progress is to be made in this area, it will come from a continued first-hand acquaintance with the extra-biblical material conjoined with a careful analysis of biblical texts. Examples of this type of approach may be seen in M. Weinfeld's interesting comparison of the Davidic covenant to the royal grant and in P. Riemann's thoughtful reappraisal of the Mosaic covenant.¹

Rogers, among others,² has complained that, though "in current Old Testament studies the concept of covenant has come to occupy a central place," "the covenant with Abraham is hardly considered at all."³ Affirming that "the covenant concept is ancient and not a later invention

¹J. J. M. Roberts, "The Ancient Near Eastern Environment" in D. A. Knight and G. M. Tucker, eds., The Hebrew Bible and Its Modern Interpreters (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), pp. 93-4.

²Similar concerns are voiced by VanDevellder, "Abrahamic Covenant Traditions," in the introduction. He also complains that "the major portion of the studies directed to this theme center around the Sinaitic-Deuteronomistic covenant traditions . . . Many studies even seem to assume that this Sinaitic-Deuteronomistic covenant completely defines and exhausts the meaning of 'covenant' in the O.T." (Abstract).

³Such neglect is due to the fact that "the patriarchal narratives are viewed as either non-historical, or revised tribal traditions which have some kind of historical basis." This "leads to all kinds of speculations as to its history and purpose." BSac 127: 241-2.

or development" he underlines the need for "many of our theological terms" to be "once again considered in this light."¹ VanDevellder, too, saw Gen 15 as a central passage to study the Abrahamic covenant.² One is thus amply justified in making of the covenantal relationship the "master key" to the whole passage.

After so discussing the entire theological conformation of the passage from the viewpoint of its covenantal content, we have to confront the alternative "Hauptschlüssel,"³ the "salvation oracle."

The Nocturnal Word of the Lord in Covenant Revelation

On an elementary theological level, "the phrase emphasizes that the word of promise wh[ich] Abram received was in fact a word from Yahweh."⁴ But its importance goes beyond this fact.

The interpretation of the "word of the Lord" that came to Abraham in a mah^azeh as a "prophetic formula" is at least as ancient as the Jewish Targumim (bⁿb^w'h), and uncontested up to the present. What is contested, however,

¹BSac 127: 256.

²"They [the 1-6 and 7-21 units] are the first to apply the word berith to Abraham's relation to God." (Abstract for chapter 3 of his dissertation).

³This is Lohfink's term for Westermann's conception. See structural study above.

⁴McGonigal, "Abraham Believed God," p. 52.

is the implication for the history of the composition of the passage. Westermann shows with numerous citations that the formula is usually considered as an indication of "a relatively late period."¹ Anbar develops some of these observations,² but Cazelles denies the implication of a late date.³

The observation, often made in the course of this debate,⁴ that 2 Sam 7:4 contains the same formula,⁵ is here pertinent. In the course of a nocturnal revelation "the word of the Lord came to Nathan in these terms: . . ." This is relevant because "Genesis 15 as the original nucleus of the Abrahamic covenant" influenced "the form of the Davidic covenant."⁶ The other elaborate statement of the Davidic covenant, Ps 89, also makes a point (89:19) of the fact that God "once spoke in a vision (ḥāzôn)."

Thus, whatever the respective date and history of the composition of these pericopes, it is clear that

¹Gen 12-36, p. 217; see also van Seters, Abraham in History, p. 253.

²JBL 101: 40-41.

³RB 69: 325-6.

⁴E.g., van Seters, Abraham in History, p. 253.

⁵Cf. Anbar, JBL 101: 40.

⁶R. Clements, Abraham and David, p. 54, quoting Mendenhall, Biblical Archaeologist 17 (1954): 72 = Law and Covenant, p. 46. Alternatively, and indifferently for my present purposes, the influence has been seen as the other way around: Westermann, Gen 12-36, pp. 217-8.

nocturnal revelations are associated with covenant grants bestowed by the Deity, specifically with two (the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants) with recognizedly many points of contact, as seen above. This in turn corroborates the key position of the covenantal conception in the present theological study.

Fear, Protection, and the Covenant Offer

The connection between fear and the need for protection requires no further elucidation. That which is less clear is what concrete threat, if any, caused fear in Abraham and prompted God to offer his protection.

Some exegetes still look for an answer, as the Palestinian Targum did, in the aftermath of the victory over the four kings. J. H. Marks, for instance, does not dismiss the possibility that the fear of Abraham was caused "by some antecedent experience like that of ch. 14."¹ Gibson tries to give some psychological depth to this solution: "the elation of victory has given way to depression and anxiety."²

On the whole, however, "presque tous les modernes ont repoussé la solution de l'exégèse juive qui traite

¹In Laymon, ed., Interpreters' One-volume Commentary, ad loc.

²J. C. L. Gibson, Genesis, The Daily Study Bible (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 2: 50.

Genèse 15 comme la suite de Genèse 14."¹ Thus some have turned to the offspring theme, so prominent in the passage, as the real clue to the fears. For Keil and Delitzsch, the non-realization of the antecedent posterity promises is what gave rise to "anxiety about the future," met by the Lord "with the comforting assurance, 'Fear not . . .'."² Several scholars have stressed the same anxiety.³ Nothing in the previous context, however, indicates such anxiety.

Others, as von Rad, think of the divine apparition itself as providing the motives for fear, a "holy terror."⁴ However, as noted several times above, there is no visual content in this mah^azeh,⁵ and previous communications of the Lord have not been described in Genesis as eliciting fear, let alone terror, in Abraham.

Still others, as Westermann, have appealed to form criticism to turn the phrase into a stylized formula

¹Caquot, Sem 12: 63.

²BCOT, 1: 211.

³W. Staerk, "Zur alttestamentlichen Literarkritik," ZAW 42 (1924): 34-74; K. Gallinger, "Die Erwählungs-traditionen Israels," BZAW 48 (1928): 39-45, in Caquot, Sem 12:56; Brueggemann, Genesis, p. 141.

⁴G. von Rad, Das erste Buch Mose, 7th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), pp. 155-6; see also Interpreters' One Volume Comm., ad loc.

⁵It was this kind of content that caused terror to Daniel (10:8ff).

without a concrete referent.¹ We have already seen that their position has been seriously called into question.

The road to a solution, however, has been open since 1932, when the self-predication of Gen 15:7 was shown to correspond to the historical prologue in a vassal investiture.² Since 'al-tirâ' is immediately connected with a similar self-predication, its meaning could be related to such an historical foundation for suzerainty. Studies by Mendenhall, Muilenburg, Baltzer, McCarthy, and others have since developed this area of research.³

Therefore, the reassurance should be connected with this previous relationship of God with the patriarch. In other words, Abraham should not fear because God has been protecting him and his family through the years and intends to continue to do so: Yahweh "à été et demeure le protecteur d'Abram."⁴

Thus understood, the motives for the fear of Abraham are general rather than concrete. They certainly include the risk of military attack and reprisals, but also, and more comprehensively, his broad vulnerability in

¹See above "The Oracle of Salvation Formula," in the structural study.

²See above "The structure of Gen 15 and covenantal elements," in the structural study.

³See summary in Calderone, Oracle and Treaty, pp. 11-12.

⁴Caquot, Sem 12: 64.

a foreign land, far from his clan (Gen 12:1), amidst the often brutal conditions of living in the second millenium B.C. Palestine. Such also has been the conclusion of Gunkel,¹ recommended by Skinner.² In this sense one can also agree with Westermann that it is not "a question of protection to be given on the occasion of a particular threat."³ Also in this sense one could agree in that the lack of offspring, by weakening the possibility of establishing familial ties in the new land, could have been a contributing factor to the fears, though not their mainstay.

Westermann, however, felt that interpreting Gen 15 through covenantal parallels both in the Bible and the Ancient Near East clashes with difficulties:

The difficulty with this explanation is that both parts of ch. 15 probably had a later origin and exhibit a mixture of forms which contain a great variety of different elements of tradition.⁴

Now, if the date of composition for Gen 15:1-6 were demonstrably higher than the earliest known covenantal parallels, this earlier Genesis date could reasonably be argued against using them, on the principle that what is

¹"Diese Situation . . . wird der Auszug sein: in fremdem Lande, schutzlos. . . ." (Genesis, p. 179).

²"Abram's defenceless position amongst the Canaanites immediately following his heroic obedience to the divine call" (ICC, 1: 278).

³Genesis 12-36, p. 218.

⁴Ibid., p. 216.

earlier should not be explained by what is later. But Westermann's reasoning here seems to condemn parallels from earlier periods, leaving us with only contemporary texts for comparison.

Such would be a most unreasonable requirement, however. On the one hand, the history of the composition of Gen 15:1-6 is far from settled.¹ On the other, parallel covenantal forms are spread over a wide portion of both second and first millenia B.C.²

Moreover, it has often been argued, against some followers of Mendenhall, that covenant forms of "hoary antiquity" can nevertheless be preserved in later documents.³ Scholars are able to relate, for instance, Hittite

¹See introduction; also Cazelles. RB 69: 321-5: "ces conclusions s'imposent-elles? Il ne semble pas"; von Rad, erste Mose, p. 153: "quellenkritisch sehr schwer zu analysieren"; Anbar, JBL 101: 39: "A major difficulty in the study of this chapter is the determination of its literary components and their respective dates; dozens of solutions have been proposed"; van Seters, Abraham in History, p. 249: "There is great diversity of opinion about the unity or disunity of Genesis 15 and about the antiquity of the traditions contained in the chapter"; etc. pace Schmid, EvTh 40: 398, who admires a "weit reichender Konsens" on these matters.

²Thus, for instance, exemplary formulars in D. J. McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant (Rome: Pontifical Bible Institute, 1963), pp. 181-205, range from 1500 to 700 B.C.

³Muffs, JJS 33: 91, records criticisms of others beside himself. In a more neutral tone, see Calderone, Oracle and Treaty, pp. 25 ff.

covenants with eighth century B.C. Aramaic inscriptions.¹ Thus, whatever the history of the composition and of the enclosed traditions for Gen 15:1-6, it is hard to see why the passage could not have been patterned after those covenantal forms or why the greater age of the parallels constitutes a serious difficulty.

According to the understanding favored here, there is indeed a connection between God's reassurance, "Fear not," and chap. 14, though not necessarily the immediate connection seen in the Rabbinical midrashic works. The oracle does not reassure Abraham against the possible unfavorable consequences of his recent victory, but confirms the message implicit in the providential outcome of the battle and other evidences of divine guidance through the years. We have already seen this concept, among the ancient exegetes, in the insightful interpretation of the Genesis Apocryphon.

Reward as Covenantal Grant

Two major problems confront the exegete in trying to discover the precise meaning of šākār: (1) What does the reward consist in? and (2) What does the reward compensate for?

¹See, e.g., J. Fitzmyer, The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire (Rome: Pontifical Bible Institute, 1967), pp. 121-25.

The nature of the reward

The identification of the reward is admittedly one of the greatest exegetical difficulties of the passage. We have already seen how this has exercised the expository imagination of the Rabbinical exegetes. Their solution is probably too doctrinaire to be seriously considered today as the probable meaning of the passage in its original historical setting, but there is no agreement on how to replace it.

Coats repeatedly insists that the content of this term in the context is "vague."¹ For Cazelles, it is also "plus difficile à analyser" than other elements.² Indeed, the contours of the reward are not detailed in the text, and therein resides much of the difficulty. Coats suggests, in view of the terminological connections with Gen 14, that it had something to do with the spoil renounced by Abraham.

Military spoils, or booty, is the content of šākār for van Seters³ and Westermann also. They, however, think of the booty promise as a stereotyped formula expected from protector deities, without a concrete referent in the particular case. Therefore, for them there is no connec-

¹Genesis, pp. 124-5.

²RB 69: 328.

³Van Seters, Abraham in History, p. 254.

tion with the events of Gen 14.¹ I have already criticized this position.²

For Snijders, too, there is no concrete referent. After criticizing Hoftijzer's interpretation of the meaning of "reward," he observes:

Isolated traditions passed on as fragments are joined up without harmonising all the features. Stories in the bible [sic] can often be compared with houses, which have been build up, not stone by stone, but with blocks or "prefabricated segments."³

I decline to follow this kind of explanation since it dilutes rather than enhances the meaning of the text.

Others have turned to the theme of offspring, once more, as the content of the promise of reward. Thus von Rad thinks that the promised gift was, primarily at least, numerous posterity.⁴

Apart from the general considerations already made on the subject of offspring, the context does not favor this solution here. In the immediate context Abraham perceives his lack of offspring as an obstacle to the reception of the promised šākār (15:2). This would make

¹Ibid., pp 254-5. Westermann's position has already been detailed in the Introduction.

²See structural study above.

³OTS 12: 264.

⁴Von Rad, erste Mose, pp. 154; see also Procksch, Die Genesis, K.A.T., 1924, quoted in Caquot, Sem 12:57.

little sense if the content of the promise were, precisely, offspring.¹

The road here taken leads to another solution. As mentioned before, the defining elements in a suzerain relationship are the provision of both protection and a grant. The latter is conceived as a reward for the services of the vassal and usually consists in land. Thus the question arises whether the promise of the land is the content of this šākār.

Such conclusion is indeed supported by many exegetes. But it has been, for the most part, independent of any covenantal understanding of the passage, and based rather in the prominence of the land theme in the chapter² and in other Abraham narratives.³

Hoftijzer deduced it from the interrelatedness of both pericopes in Gen 15,⁴ while Caquot and Cazelles, each in his own way, arrived at it by emphasizing the military

¹I am not the first in remarking the contextual inadequacy of this explanation. Cf. Caquot, Sem 12: 57.

²E.g., Brueggemann, Genesis, p. 141.

³See above under "structure" for Lohfink's observations on the land promise as the "Hauptthematik" of the section. Similarly L. Perlitt, Bundestheologie im Alten Testament (Neukirche: Neukirch. Verlag, 1969), though judging (on the basis of his reconstruction of the history of the composition of the pericope) that 15:1-6 "in seiner Grundgestalt nie auf den Bundschluss in v. 18 abgezielt war," nonetheless states that the chapter as a whole is "in seiner heutigen Gestalt eine Vergegenwärtigung der Landverheissung an Abraham," pp. 70-1, 76-7.

⁴Verheissungen, p. 20 ff.

character of the preceding context.

Cazelles reminds us that

[L]e service [du soldat] était rétribué, en Babylonie comme à Ugarit, surtout par un bien-fonds, ilku ou pilku, qui serait le meilleur équivalent du me'ôd de Deut., VI, 5 et de notre passage [Gen 15:1].¹

Caquot explains that šākār means "'récompense, salaire ou solde', qui en raison du contexte ne peut être que la Terre"² and which is granted to Abraham as "le prix de sa généreuse intervention contre les quatre rois."³ As said before,⁴ the military associations agree well with the understanding of the passage as a covenant of grant.

Calderone's study of ancient Near Eastern grant covenants, to the effect that the land grant constituted a reward for the services to be rendered by the vassal in the course of the relationship, has been already quoted. The intimate connection of the land promise with the Abrahamic covenant theme can be established not only from the context in Gen 15 but also from the closely interwoven statements in 17:7-9. However, though the promise of the land arises as a primary constituent of the grant in the context, it is not necessarily the only one.

On the analogy of secular covenants, the reward

¹RB 69: 328.

²Sem 12: 57.

³Sem 12: 64.

⁴See above under "Covenant and Structure."

should be conceived as the totality of the privileges with which Abraham was invested as the vassal of the Lord.¹ But since the Suzerain is God Himself, the Master of limitless resources, those privileges encompass much more than what Abraham could foresee at the instant.

Such is not merely a latter-day theological reflection but also the standpoint of the Biblical narratives that reported those events. The covenantal promises to Abraham were never understood as mere real estate or offspring, but as implying other privileges such as national self-determination and sovereignty (Exod 2:24).

It is no wonder, then, that these promises were understood of old as pledges of God's "mercy" and "help," actualized in all his redemptive and providential acts, as the Magnificat attests (Luke 1:46-55). This allusion may include the land and offspring promises, but it is specially appropriate as a reference to the assurance of protection ("help") and reward ("mercy," Luke 1:54).

In the light of the original historical setting of Gen 15, the inclusive and ongoing understanding of these promises is fully justifiable. Both promises in Gen 15:1

¹Thus not mere real estate, but authority was included as a matter of course in the ancient Near Eastern grant covenants. For a more general conception of reward, cf. Keil and Delitzsch, *BCOT* 1: 210f, where the reward consists of the promise "richly to reward his confidence."

were intended to remain open to the rich succession of events that was to be later called salvation history.¹

The counterpart to the reward

We have a wide range of exegetical positions on this question. Even scholars who share the same basic conception of the reward, as, e.g., Hoftijzer and Caquot (the land promise), differ in regards to what the reward compensates for. Hoftijzer looks ahead in the text and considers faith, manifested in 15:6 towards an "unglaublich" promise, as the grounds for awarding the land promise:

Die Verheissung des Landes und ihre Erhärtung durch die Bundesschluss eine Belohnung Jhwh's sind für Abrams Vertrauen in seine Macht.²

In contrast, Caquot looks behind, towards chap. 14, and concludes that the land reward was the prize for his generous intervention.³ Gunkel looked even farther back to the heroic migration from Haran (12:1-3).⁴

All of these scholars agree in that Abraham "etwas besonders des Lohnes Wüdiges getan hat."⁵ But von Rad disagrees, not only with Gunkel's proposal in particular

¹See von Rad, Erste Mose, p. 154.

²Verheissungen, p. 20, 23.

³Quoted above when dealing with his position on the nature of the reward.

⁴Genesis, p. 179.

⁵Ibid.

but also with the whole notion of a deserved reward, arguing that later in the Bible the term connotes God's gift of grace.¹ In this, however, he is explicitly opposed by Caquot, on linguistic grounds.²

Hans H. Schmid, partially supporting himself on a reconstruction of the theology of the Yahwist (J) source of Genesis, which he dates later than most critical scholars, opposes the "falsch Interpretation," found "oft gerade von Neutestamentlern," according to which "hier der Glaube als Leistung verstanden werde" and argues that the text of the passage

. . . gerade von der Einsicht ausgeht, dass jede Basierung von Gerechtigkeit auf dem menschlichen Verhalten sich als unmöglich erwiesen hat. Darum wird Abraham die Gerechtigkeit in einem unvermittelten deklaratorischen Akt durch Gott zugesprochen.³

A similar disagreement is expressed by Snijders arguing, against Hoftijzer, that the sequel of 15:1-6 does not read as a remuneration of Abraham.⁴ Westermann also rejects the concept of the promise as a reward for the good deeds of the patriarch.⁵

Thus we seem to have reached an impasse in which

¹Erste Mose, pp. 154.

²Sem 12:64.

³Schmid, H. H. "Gerechtigkeit und Glaube: Genesis 15:1-6 und sein biblischer-theologischer Kontext." Evangelische Theologie 40 (1980): 408.

⁴OTS 12:264.

⁵Promises, p. 10.

exegetes, who may in some cases be influenced by dogmatic considerations of their respective confessional traditions, turn to diverse elements of the narratives or later Bible passages for illumination, and reach disparate conclusions.

However, the analogy with suzerain-vassal relationships suggested by the pre-covenantal character of the passage provides us not only with objective controls for exegetical positions such as the covenantal models recorded in the Bible and A.N.E. epigraphic material but also with a way to reconcile valid theological concerns found in the various positions.

We have already seen that in secular enfeoffments (investitures with a fief) the grant was conceived as a reward, i.e., a compensation for vassal services. This fully harmonizes with the undisputably compensatory sense of *sākār*.¹ On the other hand, the vassal compensation differs from other rewards.

An overarching element of grace must be recognized in the relationship. In the first place, neither fealty nor obedience "paid" for vassalship in any meaningful sense. Given the privileges arising from the grant, many people just as obedient as the selected vassal would certainly have warranted the relationship, but not all of them could be fief-holding vassals of the overlord any more

¹See especially Caquot, *Sem* 12: 64, and Cazelles, *RB* 69: 328.

than all good women could become his wives. Moreover, in the idealization of covenants by the ancients, at least,¹ grant covenants were not auctioned.

Second, in the general description of suzerainty above one may observe that the grant, as a reward, compensates for (1) the fidelity in the day-to-day observance of the stipulations of the covenant, such as restrictions on the political freedom of the vassal, plus (2) his availability for extraordinary services as the occasion may demand in the framework of the suzerain-vassal relationship.²

Thus a vassal grant, as a reward, does not correspond to the amount of services that the vassal was to be called to render within the relationship, nor any particular act of obedience that derived from it. The vassal was rewarded for being the "lord's man,"³ not for any narrowly pre-defined duty.

Obedience was certainly expected from the vassal in

¹See "The pre-Covenantal concept and the preceding context" in the structural study above.

²There is no evidence that overlords were limited in their choice by previous services of the prospective vassals. Given the hereditary character of covenantal grants, it is clear that at any given moment, most vassals had inherited, not earned, their grants.

³An often recurrent expression in all historical manuals dealing with vassalage.

regards to his covenantal obligations;¹ however, the demands placed on the obedience of any particular vassal by a grant covenant were determined by the course of later events, on which both overlord and vassal might have had little or no control, and not by a computation of services already accomplished in the relationship, grant size, etc.

All this means that obedience in the suzerain-vassal relationship, at least as idealized by the ancients, was not motivated by any narrow mercenary spirit. There is no need to fear that an admission of the compensatory character of the covenant grant may push us in the direction of an "account-book religion": "Here the reward is not a prize that is earned but a special recognition to a faithful servant of the king who has performed a bold or risky service."²

Also, grace in the suzerain-vassal relationship preceded obedience, making the grant covenant an apt metaphor for the relationship of grace and obedience in God's covenant.³

Thus, within the limitations pertaining to humanly developed institutions, the grant covenant relationship

¹Calderone, Oracle and Treaty, p. 23. For its application to the Abrahamic covenant, see McComiskey, Covenants, pp. 64 ff.

²Brueggemann, Genesis, p. 141.

³This precedence of grace has been elaborated by Rogers with reference to the Abrahamic covenant. See BSac 127: 252-3.

illuminates the theological character of believer's obedience in the framework of divine grace. This is relevant not only to Gen 15:1-6 but to Biblical theology as a whole. Calderone reminds us of

. . .the juridical relationship of sovereign to vassal which Israel had adopted to express her own historical and religious dealings, as a people subject to Him who had received past benefits and would continue to enjoy his protection."¹

Within this relationship, the Abrahamic covenant has a privileged place:

Because this covenant is foundational to Israel's history and because it plays a major role in God's dealing with the nation, its importance cannot be overstressed.²

Offspring as Extension of Grant Beneficiaries

The verses related to the offspring theme form the bulk of the unit. In spite of such prominence, the previous structural analysis of the chapter suggests that is actually subordinated to the promises accompanying Yahweh's self-predication, namely protection and reward. This suggestion may be elaborated as noted below.

In the second pericope, Gen 15:7-21, predictions on Abraham's death, as well as on the migration, oppression, liberation, and return of his offspring, though taking up much space, are actually subordinate, deriving as they do

¹Oracle and Treaty, p. 68.

²BSac 127: 256.

from his request for surety about the inheritance of the land. The latter promise, not the detailed predictions, is the real "Hauptthematik" of the section.¹

The already established parallelism between the pericopes 15:1-6 and 15:7-21 then indicates that the predictions about a son and numerous posterity (15:2-5), which arise from Abraham's request for clarification and surety about God's promises, are likewise subordinated to the ideas of protection and reward, which are the real point of the oracle introduction.²

An exegetical consequence of this conclusion is that the "trust in Yahweh" of Abraham in 15:6 is not to be limited, as often supposed,³ to trusting the promise of offspring.

An identical conclusion obtains from a contextual study. The self-revelation of Yahweh in Gen 15:1 is the first speech by God about Himself in the Abraham narratives, and indeed in Scripture as a whole. We have already seen that this self-revelation is explicitly couched in words with covenantal associations which constitute an invitation to trust Him, the acceptance of

¹Lohfink, Landverheissung, p. 49.

²Wenham, Genesis, p. 334, correctly perceives these two promises, protection and reward, as the main content of the oracle.

³See e.g., van Seters, Abraham in History and Trad., p. 261, and the position of L. Gaston above.

which is reported in 15:6. This acceptance is described as "trusting" or "believing" (he'-'min) for the first time in Genesis, though Abraham has received promises before.¹

Therefore, if we arbitrarily limit Abraham's "trust in Yahweh" in 15:6 to believing in future offspring, we thereby depict an Abraham that does not react to the momentous self-revelation of God, remaining indifferent to the invitation to trust in Him as his Protector and munificent Lord, but concerned only with the surety of the promises about offspring. Such is an unnecessary mutilation of the meaning of the passage.² Certainly, the trust

¹To circumscribe this unique 'mn response to the promise of descent alone exaggerates the (admittedly great) importance of offspring for Abraham misleadingly. Wenham, Genesis, p. 334, exaggerates the "unmitigated disaster" of childlessness by arguing that "without children there was no one. . . to carry out the funerary rites and secure your soul's rest in the life to come." Besides employing a curious eschatological terminology (one could make a case for an ancient belief in a shadowy existence in Sheol, but not for such soul existence to constitute "the life to come"), the link between funerary rites and transcendental rest can hardly be documented in the Pentateuch, or indeed in Scripture as a whole. See also in the previous chapter, under "Targum Onkelos," the struggle of Aberbach and Grossfeld with the problem posed by the significance of childlessness when connected with the fact that 'mn occurs for the first time here.

²The difficulties for those who so narrowly circumscribe the meaning of 15:6 cannot be explained away by resort to terminological nuancing. Though A. Jepsen, art. "âman," Botterweck and Ringgren, TDOT, 1: 308 ff., has tried to downplay the theological importance of 'mn in the Bible, he found impossible to avoid recognizing its significance in the group of passages, headed precisely by Gen 15:6, that deal with man's attitude towards God. This group also includes Exod 4:31; 14:31; 19:9; Ps 106:12; 119:66 and parallels, Isa 7:9 (and parallel in 2 Chr 20:20); 28:16 and 43:10.

in the person of Yahweh implies faith in his words, including the promise of offspring, but encompasses more than the latter.¹

A historically responsible way to assess the role of the promise in the passage is to compare the references to offspring in the grant covenants of the ancient Near East alluded above.

Provisions about the descendance were among the "most important concession[s] made to a vassal."² This may be seen in the treaty of Suppiluliuma with Hugganas:

I, too, the sun [the Hittite King] will protect you in a friendly way; similarly (?) will I protect your sons; similarly (?) will my son protect your sons.³

Even more detailed is a treaty studied by Weinfeld and McCarthy. When granting Dattaša as a fief to Ulmi-Teshub, the Hittite overlord Tudhaliyaš IV (c. 1300 B.C.) stipulated:

¹True, it is possible to conceive the promise of offspring comprehensively, covering the whole history of salvation. But then we are dealing with a conception already enlightened by the salvific promises of protection and reward. It is not merely "offspring" but the chosen seed. That which we are really contesting here is a restrictive view of the offspring. The salvific promises, in any case, maintain their priority.

²Calderone, Oracle and Treaty, pp. 18-19.

³Ibid., p. 19. Calderone also quotes from other Hittite treaties to the same effect, including the one of Mursilis with Talmisharruma.

(4) As for thee, Ulmi-Teshub, (I have affirmed thy possession of Datassa).¹

After thee thy son and thy grandson shall hold it, and no one shall take it from them. (But) if one of thy line sins (against Hatti), the king of Hatti will have him tried, and if he is condemned he will be sent to the king of Hatti where, if he merits it, he will be executed.

(10) Let no one take away Ulmi-Teshub's inheritance and country from his line to give to another line. Let it all remain the possession of Ulmi-Teshub and his line. However, the issue of a daughter of Ulmi-Teshub may not take it. If there is no issue in the male line, it shall return (to the king of Hatti). The descendants of a daughter of Ulmi-Teshub shall come (to the king of Hatti;) if they are in another country they shall be brought to the king of Hatti.

This is the statute for the kingship of Dattasa.

(15) The country I have given thee, Ulmi-Teshub, the boundaries I have set for thee, keep them, do not cross them. The boundaries are as follows: [a detailed geographical description ensues].²

The relevance of this grant covenant to the passage at hand is striking: it first discusses "the statute for the kingship" of the fief, essentially the extension of the grant benefits to Ulmi-Teshub's line of male descentance, then the fief boundaries definition. In a similar fashion, Gen 15 contains in its first pericope a discussion of the future succession to God's grant for Abraham (2-5), and in the second pericope a detailed description of the promised land boundaries (18-21).

The statute for the extension of grant benefits to offspring contains a provision for a case in which one of Ulmi-Teshub's descendants "sins" against the king of

¹Emphasis in the original, as well as the spelling "Datassa" (for Dattaša).

²McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, p. 183.

Hatti.¹ The provision calls to mind another Biblical grant covenant, the Davidic one in 2 Sam 7:

When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring [zar^c*kâ] to succeed you, who will come from your own body [mim-mâ^ceykâ], and I will establish his kingdom [or "kingship," mamlaktô].² He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, [^cwh Hip.], I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom [ûmam-lakt^c*kâ] will endure for ever before me, your throne will be established for ever. (2 Sam 7:12-16)

Thus, a provision for punishment in the case of a descendant's misbehavior is also included here in a statute for the "kingship." Weinfeld has remarked on the additional parallel of an unconditional grant: though a particular descendant might be executed for his "sin," even then "Let no one take away Ulmi-Teshub's inheritance and country from his line to give to another line."³

These similarities confirm the commonality of forms between these two ancient Near East covenants (David's and Ulmi-Teshub's). Not that the grant of Tudhalyaš IV is exceptional, however: Mursilis made similar provisions for

¹No such provision is made about Ulmi-Teshub's own case, apparently implying that his uprightness had been proven beyond suspicion before the establishment of the covenant.

²As in the phrase ^cyr hmlkh, "city of the kingship," i.e., royal capital (1 Sam 27:5, etc.).

³JAOS 90: 189.

the offspring of Talmisharruma,¹ and Weinfeld quotes numerous parallels from other Hatti and Nuzi documents.² In turn, the Davidic covenant is closely related to Gen 15, as well known.³ The successor "from your own body" links it to Gen 15:4.⁴ This triangular relationship (Gen 15--Hittite grant covenants--Davidic covenant) shows that the concern for "offspring" in Gen 15:2-5 should be connected with the statute for extension of grant benefits to successors in a covenantal bond.

Other legal formulae of the Abrahamic covenant, including "on that day [the covenant between A and B was formalized]" and the "everlasting" covenant with the offspring have already been studied by Weinfeld in their relationship to extra-Biblical literature of the ancient Near East.⁵ In each case, including the grant of Hebron to Caleb and priestly status and revenues to Aaronites, the extension of the benefits to offspring is an element.

The Biblical instances show the extension of divine grant benefits on two levels, that of an immediate successor and of other beneficiaries. This is true of the Davidic covenant in Nathan's oracle (2 Sam 7). The

¹Calderone, Oracle and Treaty, p. 19.

²JAOS 90: 189 ff.

³Cf. Clements, Abraham and David and his bibliography.

⁴Weinfeld, JAOS 90: 200.

⁵JAOS 90: 199 ff.

descendant "from your own body" is the universal heir, but some benefits of the covenantal bond reach also the people (7:10-11). It is true as well of the other elaborated statement, with nearly identical provisions for the "sin" of a descendant, Ps 89:19-37.¹ The pattern is the same in the Noachic covenant,² and in another statement of the Abrahamic covenant, Gen 17.³ The promises of protection and reward extend primarily to a line of direct descendants and secondarily to a great multitude. Therefore, the two-tiered promise of offspring in our passage, a legitimate successor (15:2-3) and numerous posterity (15:4-5),⁴ conforms to the general pattern for Biblical covenants in which God is bound.⁵ Similar provisions are found in other

¹Promises of protection and reward for David are first introduced (19-26), and followed next by an extension to a direct successor (27-29) and to a never-ending dynastic line (30-37). The people is also involved, as both the specific mention in 89:19 and the Psalm context as a whole abundantly shows.

²It is established "with you and with your descendants after you" (Gen 9:9) but "all living creatures of every kind" are also involved (9:10,16).

³We also find a primary reference to Isaac as the successor to the "everlasting covenant" (17:19), to whose line the land is granted (17:8), but also secondary beneficiaries, "many nations" (17:5) including Ishmael and his numerous posterity (17:20).

⁴Explained by some authors as evidence for divided authorship. See van Seters, Abraham in History, p. 256.

⁵This category was established by Mendenhall, IDB 1:717-8, as consisting in the Abrahamic, Davidic, and Noachic covenants principally.

ancient Near Eastern suzerain treaties.¹

In summary, the role of the offspring promise in our passage does not consist in underlining Abraham's fears or anxiety about the future, nor his desire that God's gifts take the form of descendance. Its significance is better grasped when realizing that a grant covenant aims at a stable relationship of the suzerain, not towards an individual merely, but towards his whole lineage.² This explains Abraham's surprise at the grant offer expressed in 15:2. What kind of grant can he receive, i.e., how can he be selected as a vassal, when he "departs barren?"

In this way Abraham does not emerge as an opportunist extracting additional gifts from God, a weakling whining because of childlessness in the face of so many other blessings, or a spoiled child, who would only have gifts coming specifically his way. He is merely trying to grasp the import of an amazing offer, which his present barren condition renders unintelligible without further clarification.³

Though not expressed in covenantal terminology,

¹Calderone, Oracle and Treaty, pp. 21 ff.

²A similar though narrower understanding may be found in Brueggemann: "The reward of land requires having heirs," Genesis, p. 142.

³Such unintelligibility is expressed in repeated calls for attention to the fact of childlessness: "Note that you have given me no offspring, and notice that a household dependant is the one who will succeed me" (15:3).

ancient midrashic documents shared a similar understanding. This is evident in Philo and, to a lesser degree, in the Genesis Apocryphon and Josephus. These sources insisted that God's gift was meaningless unless a line of heirs was provided. Modern exegesis should not lose view of this illuminating insight.

Trust and Uprightness in the Covenantal Bond

The foregoing course of exegesis has brought us to the point where Abraham, who had puzzled over a grant covenant offered to a childless man, after being reassured of paternity and numerous posterity, realizes that this precondition for a covenant is now met and becomes ready to accept the covenant relationship. The Lord "considered that as uprightness," i.e., the right thing for Abraham to do, the appropriate response on his part.

This covenantal interpretation of the act of trusting in 15:6 is far from unique.¹ Though most

¹Cazelles exegets 15:6 as meaning that Abraham "s'était . . . inféodé à Yahvé" (RB 69: 335). M. G. Kline sees Gen 15:6 as the account of the vassal response during the course of a "solemn covenant ritual," described further below in the chapter. See "Abraham's Amer.," Westminster Theological Journal 31 (1968-9): 1-11, esp. p. 3. O. Palmer Robertson cautiously agrees with the latter in general terms. (WTJ 42: 262 ff). A related conception is held by A. S. Herbert, Genesis 12-50: Introduction and Commentary (London: SCM, 1962), p. 37, though using the terminology of the King/subject, rather than the more general Suzerain/vassal, covenantal relationship: "Abraham has acted as a loyal subject of God the King in trusting the promise."

commentators connect the trusting of Abraham with the promise of 15:4-5, Cazelles has recognized in 15:6 a reference to Abraham's firm acceptance of "l'invitation à ne pas craindre et à prendre possession du pays," i.e., to 15:1.¹ He quotes previous research showing that 'mn "suivi de la preposition b, comme ici, implique référence à la puissance de Yahvé ou à la fidélité d'un allié."² Thus the Biblical author has in mind God's protective power or the offer of an alliance as expressed in the opening self-revelation.

Considering this connection as sufficiently established, we can proceed to the more particular questions on the precise relationship of trusting in the person of the Suzerain with grant covenants as a sociological institution in the ancient Near East, and of trusting with the "uprightness" associated in the passage.

Trust and the Exclusivity of the Covenantal Bond

We have already cited Mendenhall to the effect that those covenants always made a point of asking the vassal to trust his Suzerain. The reason for this lies much beyond

¹RB 69: 332. We have arrived at this conception guided by the flow of ideas and the structure of the passage, and only later noticed the agreement of Cazelles.

²Ibid., alluding to Hoftijzer, Verheissungen, pp. 17-18 and E. Pfeiffer, "Glauben im A.T.," ZAW 71 (1959): 158-9.

the mere duty of a good subject in trusting his lord.¹

In the ancient Near East, the cultural characteristics of vassalage made such "trusting" essential. Near East covenant models² always stipulate that the vassal must have no other lord.³ Typical is the phrase in the treaty between Suppiluliuma and Huzqanas: "you must acknowledge no one else [as suzerain]."⁴ This prevented an eventual conflict of loyalties.⁵

The ancient Near East requirement of exclusivity in the covenantal bond left the vassal at the mercy of his sole lord for protection. Since he could appeal to no other powerful lord for help, it is easy to see why this demand of exclusivity was always associated immediately with an exhortation to "hold lasting and unlimited trust" in the suzerain. He was to continue to trust even in the

¹As suggested, e.g., by a quick reading of Herbert, Genesis 12-50, p. 37.

²This contrasts with European medieval suzerainty covenants (or "feudal contracts") where the vassal bond was not exclusive; the count of Champagne, for example, was vassal to nine different suzerains at one point in time. See T. W. Wallbank et al., Civilization Past and Present, 3d ed. (Glenview: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1983), p. 197.

³Mendenhall, Law and Covenant, p. 33.

⁴Calderone, Oracle and Treaty, p. 19.

⁵Hence there was no need of an institution as the European liege, or "prior homage," to determine loyalty priorities in case of a conflict between lords that share the same vassal. See Encyclopedia Britannica: Micropaedia art. "liege."

face of malicious rumors that the lord was acting disloyally towards the vassal.¹

The requirement of exclusivity, however, was not reciprocal. The vassal could have no more than one suzerain, but his lord might have many other vassals. This advantage of the suzerain made trust in his benevolence all the more crucial--a "most important corollary."²

This sociological background is theologically significant. Beyerlin has noted that the exclusivity of the covenantal bond in the ancient Near East is the "prototype of the corresponding claim of Yahweh upon Israel's exclusive worship and service in the first commandment."³

In our own context, it enhances the "leap of faith" involved in Abraham's reaction. The trusting attitude demanded by the covenantal relationship implied a "renouncing everyone else"--to use the language of our marriage vows. We saw a similar conception in Philo, though couched in a rather mystical language.

This understanding is much more meaningful than interpreting Abraham's reaction as believing that the announcement about a son would become true in the future

¹Mendenhall, Law and Covenant, p. 33.

²Ibid., p. 30.

³Herkunft und Geschichte, p. 63, Engl. transl. p. 53, quoted in Nicholson, God and His People, p. 63.

--a joyful task for Abraham's paternal heart, but hardly worth of special notice, as Nahmanides remarked when rejecting such interpretation.¹

Uprightness in the Covenantal Relationship

Since "the primary purpose of the suzerainty treaty was to establish a firm relationship of mutual support between the two parties,"² there was a great deal of interdependence. Therefore, just as the prospective vassal had to make sure that the suzerain-to-be was a fully reliable person, the prospective suzerain had to make sure that the vassal-to-be was a person of honor, since so much depended upon his loyalty.

Indeed, loyalty has been recognized as the General-klausel or Grundsatzklärung of the covenant formulary.³ Weinfeld has studied this aspect in Assyrian grant covenants. He cites the grant of Ashurbanipal to Bultā,

. . . whose heart is devoted (lit. is whole) to his master, served me (lit. stood before me) with truthfulness, acted perfectly (lit. walked in perfection) in my palace, grew up with a good name and kept the charge of

¹See above in the linguistic analysis of 15:6.

²Mendenhall, Law and Covenant, p. 30.

³An "élément explicité par K. Baltzer . . . mais ignoré par G. Mendenhall," according to Vogels, La Promesse Royale, p. 14. He seems to refer to the "Statement of Substance Concerning the Future Relationship of the Partners to the Treaty," in K. Baltzer, The Covenant Formulary (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), pp. 12-13.

my kingship.¹

The relevance of this citation to our study can be confirmed by revising the translation. Though he follows a rendering of *kinātu* in *ina kināti izi[zūma]* as "truthfulness," it should be noted that the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary interprets it, in this very same context, as "loyalty."² In addition to "truth," this term means "correct measure, correct behavior, justice, loyalty, stability, permanency" and in its adverbial use, as here, "justly, loyally," etc.³ Thus it overlaps much of the semantic area covered in Hebrew by *שֶׁדֶּאֱמָרָה*. It is no wonder, then, that the Aramaic *qšth*, "truth," was used to translate the latter Hebrew term in STg.

From this semantic closeness arises the phraseology that associates *'emet* (truth) and *שֶׁדֶּאֱמָרָה* in the description of David's loyalty: "who walked before you in truth, in righteousness and uprightness of heart" (1 Kgs 3:6). The last phrase, as Weinfeld shows with other examples, is the counterpart to Assyrian *libbašu gummuru*, "with his whole heart."

These concerns surface repeatedly in the "covenants in which God is bound" and other Biblical covenants of grant. In Gen 17, the main statement of the Abrahamic

¹JAOS 90: 185.

²CAD 8: 384: "who has served me loyally."

³Ibid.

covenant outside Gen 15, the concern with the moral qualities of the patriarch appears foremost in the text, immediately after the self-predication:

When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty, walk before me and be blameless [*wehyêh tâmim*]. I will confirm my covenant between be and you, and will greatly increase your numbers." (17:1-2)

The *wehyêh tâmim*, according to Weinfeld, means "be fully devoted,"¹ in the light of its parallels in other covenantal passages.² It should be related to the *ṣ̣ēdāqâh* of which our passage speaks, as Gen 6:9 shows. This passage shares with 17:1 the mention of a *tâmim* quality and "walking with God," on the one hand, and on the other, shares the *ṣ̣dq* quality with Gen 15:6. All these qualities are predicated of another recipient of a grant covenant, Noah:

This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man (*ṣ̣addiq*), blameless (*tâmim*) among the people of his time, and he walked with God. (6:9)

Weinfeld, in addition to many Hittite, Hurrian, Assyrian, Ugaritic, and other West Semitic grant covenants, also studied the same moral concern in the grant of Hebron to Caleb and the grant of priesthood to the Aaronites.³

From all of the above we infer that the nature of *ṣ̣ēdāqâh* in Gen 15:6 is personal uprightness as a necessary

¹So translated in the NIV at 1 Kgs 11:4.

²*JAOS* 90: 200.

³*Ibid.*, 184-203, *passim*.

condition for the covenantal relationship.

This idea may be considered a special case within the more general conception of ṣ^ʿḏāqāh in Gen 15:6 as a relationship acceptable to God. The latter is defended by several authors. Coats uses this very terminology,¹ while Skinner speaks of "a right relation to God"² just as von Rad identifies it as the only right attitude towards the Lord.³ Cazelles' suggestion of ṣ^ʿḏāqāh as political prosperity has not prospered,⁴ to judge from current literature.

When trying to specify the concept of a relationship acceptable to God with greater precision, however, there is much less agreement. Several authors think of a forensic pronouncement, "a divine sentence of approval,"⁵ a term that "had its setting in the law-court."⁶

Others place its original setting in a priestly pronouncement,⁷ though, of course, there is no priest in

¹Genesis, p. 124.

²ICC 1:280.

³Erste Mose, p. 156.

⁴RB 69: 334.

⁵Skinner, ICC 1:280.

⁶Herbert, Gen 12-50, p. 37.

⁷Westermann, Erste Mose, p. 176; the concept is already found in Begrich, according to Dion, CBO 29: 203, who quotes from a reedition of Begrich's article known to me in Gesammelte Studien (Munich, 1964).

the passage,¹ or in a "free and wholly individual" relationship between God and Abraham.²

But an interpretation of this term in the present context based on its covenantal loyalty background is not completely unknown either: Gunkel described this $\text{ṣ}^*\text{ḡāqāh}$ as God's evaluation of Abraham's act of faith as the behavior of a "treuen und frommen Knecht," i.e., "das Verhalten eines guten, frommen, treuen Dieners Gottes."³

The covenantal interpretation does not, of course, exclude other settings completely, such as priestly or forensic.⁴ In the absence of clear references to either law-courts or priests in the passage, however, our interpretation seems the one best focused on the context, while

¹Coats, Genesis, p. 124.

²"Freien und ganz persönlichen Verhältnisses" is stated by von Rad, Erste Mose, p. 156, in sharp disagreement with the latter view. Von Rad's position, in turn, is severely rejected by Coats, Genesis, p. 124.

³Genesis, p. 180. Though the word "covenant" is not used here, the concept of vassal is approximated with "Diener" and "Knecht."

⁴Since the suzerain was often a king, or at any rate a person of dignity, judicial duties were normally part and parcel of his activity, and the evaluation of a vassal must certainly be influenced by his law-court practice; therefore the forensic interpretation is not wide from the mark. The same is valid for the priestly pronouncement. There was no sharp distinction in antiquity between a "cultic" and a "kingly" function of the Deity. "The distinction between palace and temple is only minor" according to M. Ottosson, "hēkhāl," TDOT, 3: 383. Thus the Lord's acceptance, as divine King, of a vassal does not radically differ from his acceptance of a cultic act.

capable of incorporating valid elements of other interpretations.

The Link between Trust and Uprightness
in the Covenant

Since we have found that the suffix -h at the end of wayyahš*behâ does not refer to the promise of posterity, but to Abraham's act of trusting, it is necessary to delimit more precisely the relationship between trusting and uprightness.

Here again we find a great disparity among the exegetes. At one end of the range we find the position that š*đâqâh means "merit" (15:6b to be translated: "He reckoned it to his merit"), "a reward for trusting the Lord" that was inserted in the narrative "encouraging the people to rely upon the divine promises."¹ At the other end is the conviction that the text implicitly excludes services, ceremonies, or obedient acts when proclaiming faith as the only thing that could place Abraham in a right relationship with God.² Near the middle of the range one finds those holding that this evaluation of Abraham "could only have arisen on the basis of legalism, while at the

¹Anbar, JBL 101: 44-5. See also Hoftijzer, Verheissungen, p. 23. The latter has taken issue with the position of Heidland that any thought about reward is alien to 15:6b. His argument is that since God counted (hšb) Abraham as a šaddiq, he must therefore deal with him as such, i.e., some "Gutes zuteil werden lässt." Verheissungen, pp. 19-20.

²So von Rad, Erste Mose, p. 156.

same time points beyond it" towards a "real approximation to the Apostle [Paul]'s standpoint."¹

Some authors emphasize Abraham's "struggle to believe," i.e., "his clawing his way back to faith after a long and desperate struggle with himself;"² the "Tat des Glaubens wider alle Wahrscheinlichkeit."³ These exegetes relate this "struggle" to the acceptance of the promise about offspring, "wiewohl es unglaublich scheint."⁴ Beyond the fact that there is no explicit indication of struggle in the passage, such belief about the promise takes a back seat to the acceptance of God Himself as the sole Protector and Savior in Abraham's life, as seen before.

A deeper theological elaboration of the former view can even add a messianic twist:

Because of trust specifically in the coming seed that would deliver men from the curse [Gen 5:29] and would introduce them into the blessedness of God, Abraham was regarded as righteous.⁵

Thus, according to this interpretation, Abraham did not merely believe that an offspring would come in time as God had promised, but he also trusted in that seed, i.e.,

¹Skinner, ICC 1: 280.

²Gibson, Genesis 2:52.

³Gunkel, Genesis, p. 180.

⁴Hoftijzer, Verheissungen, p. 23.

⁵Robertson, WTJ 42: 268-9.

trusted that the seed would be the Deliverer of mankind. Legitimate as this position may be as an independent theological reflection, it seems to go beyond the simple meaning of the passage at hand. Note that 15:6 explicitly says that Abraham trusted in Yahweh, not in the seed.¹ Also, since in 15:1 Abraham was admonished to trust in Yahweh as his protector and munificent Lord, it would be strange to find at the end of the same unit that the patriarch was regarded as righteous for trusting in his own seed as the Deliverer, nothing being said at the time about the acceptance of the promises of protection and reward.

Other authors have emphasized a tangible (or rather audible) demonstration of belief on the part of Abraham at the instant reported in 15:6.² They feel that Abraham "said 'Amen' to the promises the Lord made" and that he made a "commitment" to God as Someone in which he did "utterly rely."³ The commitment certainly is implied in the pre-covenantal setting of the passage, as seen above,

¹Robertson's position might seem, *prima facie*, to imply that the text identifies Yahweh with the seed. Such would be a short-circuiting way to read Genesis in the light of the NT.

²Kline has argued for a declarative or "delocutive" sense both for *w^ehe'emin* and *wayyahš^ebehâ* in 15:6. Thus the verse, *pace* von Rad, would not record purely mental acts but actual declarations of the Suzerain and vassal (*WTJ* 31: 1-11).

³So, even before Kline, Davidson, *Genesis 12-50*, p. 44.

and the "amen" (~~cum~~ audible verdict of justification)¹ is plausible, though not certain nor indispensable for the interpretation.²

Indeed, the pre-covenantal setting of the passage suggests that we take a middle ground in these controversies.

One should, first of all, remember that we are dealing in this covenantal framework with a forward-looking evaluation of uprightness.³ Any evidence of uprightness which the suzerain looked for in the prospective vassal had importance only as an indication and anticipation of future loyalty inside the relationship.

We have already seen that the grant did not have to reward past services, nor any particular act in the future relationship. Moral qualities foreshadowing loyalty were certainly requisite. But mere fitness for the vassal status hardly explains the grant entirely: the choice of a vassal by a suzerain involves an imponderable element of "grace."

Analogously, Abraham's trusting reliance fulfilled a precondition but did not constitute the full content of

¹WTJ 31: 11.

²Cf. Robertson, WTJ 42: 263-4.

³The failure to fully grasp this fact has led P. Kalluveettil, Declaration and Covenant (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1982), p. 180, n. 234, to express reservations about the validity of identifying Genesis 15 with grant-covenants.

the assumed uprightness. His recognition of God's guidance in past events as the "saving history" preceding the covenant, and his full commitment to God as his sole Protector and Savior (which, through his outward "amen" or not, the Deity could fully appreciate), had evidenciary value, as "ein deutlicher Beweis, dass Abraham gerecht sei."¹

As such, it fulfilled a necessary precondition for the pronouncement of uprightness, though the pronouncement itself was not a reward earned by producing such evidence. Rather, the thankful recognition of past guidance and "utter reliance" of Abraham on Yahweh were the indications selected by the Sovereign as bespeaking the requisite vassal uprightness. This evidence was necessarily taken *pars pro toto*, and only to the extent that fealty can be gauged in a relationship that is just beginning to come into existence, but still provided the basis for the declaration.

This implies an understanding of *wayyahš*behā* as "considered," rather than "regarded as something that Abraham was not."² The point is difficult, since verbs

¹Gunkel, Genesis, p. 180.

²The latter is the form that Robertson, WTJ 42: 265, prefers. He admits that "the phraseology may not in itself exclude absolutely that the faith of Abraham was considered as his righteousness. But the context strongly pushes in [the] other direction." McGonigal, "Abraham Believed God," pp. 83-5, 87, has countered that the sense "regard as something else, which in fact it is not" is

used for evaluation and categorization are subject to the tensions inherent in these activities. Thus, when a remark such as "A is considered as B" is chosen over the simpler "A is B," we are normally able to infer both that there are reasons to assimilate A to B and that a different categorization would also be conceivable. In any case, a purely fictional sense for *ḥšb*, as the equivalent of "pretend" in children's play, has never been proposed. For the person who "regards" A as B, at least, A is B in a very real sense.¹

For Gen 15:6, in particular, the covenantal setting suggests that this tension between belonging and not belonging to the *šēdāqāh* category should be preserved rather than resolved into a denial of any objective basis for considering the act of trusting as uprightness or into a description of this act as fully deserving the characterization of righteousness.

As seen above, this act is in itself humbly obedient to the covenant stipulations and joyously grateful to the antecedent history of the covenant. It may thus be considered a true sign of a larger expected uprightness.²

usually accompanied by the preposition *k-*, here absent. This distinction is not always supported by the texts, however.

¹"In Yahweh's eyes, Abram is in fact righteous." McGonigal, "Abraham Believed God," p. 87.

²"Sign" in the sense of participating in the reality to which it points, not mere arbitrary symbol.

Thus it is hard to agree with Skinner in denying this uprightness any subjective moral character,¹ in the face of other Biblical passages where "une phrase construite exactement comme la nôtre"² occurs (2 Sam 19:20, Ps 32:2), and where the moral character of the actions reflects back on the personality of the agents, not merely on a particular relationship.

In our view, then, the text envisions in Abraham an uprightness that surpasses the initial act of believing, and the Lord's sentence of covenantal approval did not come as a "reward" for this or any other act. The approval came by through Abraham's trusting the Lord, but not because of his trusting the Lord.³ As Brueggemann observed,

Clearly, trusting is not the cause of fulfillment, for that would reduce things to quid pro quo. On the other hand, it is clear that only those who hope will be given the gift. This does not make a very logical argument. But it is a key insight of biblical faith.⁴

Salvation Oracle and Suzerainty Covenant

We postponed until this subsection the clarification of the relationship between our passage and other words of assurance and encouragement, namely, the

¹ICC 1: 280.

²Cazelles, RB 69: 333.

³On this see McComiskey, Covenants, pp. 64 ff.

⁴Genesis, p. 141.

"salvation oracle."¹ Such postponement was necessary. The reason, as an examination of the passages studied by Begrich shows, is that the genre is inextricably bound in the Bible with covenantal contents such as reviewed in the foregoing discussion of theological ideas.

Thus the "Fear not, for I am with thee" and similar expressions of Isa 41:10, 43:1,5 stand in immediate connection with statements of Israel's servanthood (Isa 41:8-9; 43:10). These, in turn, developed from what Zimmerli terms "self-designation of the righteous."² This self-designation "confesses allegiance to a master" in such a way that

. . . withdraws from the dominion of all other possible masters, and with inner justification he can thus ask the master to whom he confesses allegiance to see to it for his part that his dominion is upheld and his servant protected. The honour of the divine Lord is also at stake.³

Elements such as protection by a master and exclusivity of allegiance to him, as already seen above, are characteristic of suzerainty treaties. Zimmerli goes on to develop the exclusivity of the relationship with one master, who freely elected Israel (the individual "can only become a servant of the Lord in so far as he is a member of

¹See the reference to the work of J. Begrich, "Das priesterliche Heilsorakel," ZAW 52 (1934): 81-92 above, under the context and structure of the passage.

²W. Zimmerli, art. *pais theou*, TDNT 5: 662, cf. n. 41, and 659-60.

³*Ibid.*, p. 660.

Israel") and revealed his protection in history.¹ As the secular prototype of this relationship, Zimmerli cites 2 Kgs 16:7:

Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, "I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me."

NIV here uses "vassal" to translate *ben*, literally, "son."² It is only in this vassal condition that Ahaz can invoke the protection of the Assyrian sovereign. Thus it is no wonder that the "Fear notes" of Isa 41 and 43 are tied to Israel's condition of *'ebed YHWH*,³ elected by Yahweh as such (41:8-9, 44:1; 45:4),⁴ in its character of "seed of Abraham," who was Yahweh's friend (*'oh*bi*,⁵ Isa 41:8): Israel is indeed God's vassal, able to witness God's protection and Lordship as manifested in the foregoing history (Isa 43:10).⁶ The covenant concept, then, under-

¹Ibid.

²Cf. the covenantal associations in Ps 2:7-9.

³Cf. the undisputable suzerain-covenantal associations of this phrase in Ps 89:3,20.

⁴I.e., not bought nor born a slave to him, hence "servant" as a high-positioned vassal.

⁵Not the usual term to express this idea (cf. *rêa'*), *'ohêb* is sometimes associated with alliances (1 Kgs 5:15). When applied to Abraham, it is connected with the grant of the land (1 Chr 20:7). There is therefore no way to escape covenantal associations.

⁶I.e., they are "living proofs" of the fact that He has "revealed and saved and proclaimed" and that "no one can deliver out of [His] hand" (43:10-12).

lies the Isaianic passages.¹

Indeed, the tendency to assimilate all these "fear not" passages into a single "oracle of salvation" category and to ignore the connection many of them exhibit with the "Patriarchal Oracle" has been decried.²

Another group of passages, closer to ours in the canon, exhibits a similar relationship. Dion has studied

¹Ivan Seters, Abraham in History, p. 267, utilizes some of the observations of Begrich. He understands Gen 15:1-6 as "a prophetic word addressed to the exilic community" to be explained through "the theme of Deutero-Isaiah," and concentrates on Isa 40:9-10, where "we have together in the same short space of one saying several of the same ingredients that we find in Gen. 15:1." He underlines "do not be afraid ('al-tirâ'i)," "Lord Yahweh ('*donây YHWH)]," and "reward (š*kârô)." To these observations one can add: (1) In the same "saying," the reference to the powerful arm of the Lord (implying protection and salvation) and, in the immediately preceding unit, the concern with the eternally established dbr 'lhym (40:8). (2) The "word of our God" that "stands forever" (40:6-8), related to the "word of the Lord" that came to Abraham "in a revelation" (Gen 15:1) to assure him of the perpetual possession of the country toward which the exiled in Babylon, the "seed of Abraham" (Isa 41:8), are to return across the wilderness (Isa 40:1-5). (3) They, just like their forefather, are to trust in the mighty arm of the Lord and his munificence (Isa 40:10, cf. Gen 15:1), "lift up your eyes and look to the heavens" at the "starry host" (Isa 40:26, cf. Gen 15:5), and "hope in the Lord" (Isa 40:31, cf. Gen 15:6). (5) At the end of 40:9, "Here is your God" has a covenantal ring. The substance of the covenant of God with Israel is summed up in the statement that Yahweh was to be "your God" (Ex 6:7). For the "statement of substance" as an integral part of the covenant form, see Baltzer, The Covenant Formulary, pp. 12-13. For the formula "to be your God," etc. see Vogels, Promesse, pp. 58, 86-7 and passim (he studies it, under the name "formule d'alliance," for the Sinaitic covenant especially).

²E. W. Conrad, "The 'Fear not' Oracles in Second Isaiah," Vetus Testamentum 34 (1984): 129-52, see esp. p. 151-2.

the genre "oracle of salvation" especially in the Genesis passages that include the following elements:

[T]hey are words in direct discourse spoken by the divinity himself, addressing someone in the second person singular; each contains the opening formula "Do not fear" ('al-tirâ'), this is then followed by the announcement of a theme of confidence: "I am with you" (26,23; 28,15; equivalent formulas in 15,1 and especially 46,4; "for God has heard," 21,17); the whole passage ends with a promise which is more or less precise depending on each situation.¹

These passages, besides 15:1, are: 21:17ff, 26:23ff, LXX 28:13ff, and 46:1ff. We can easily observe that each is directly related to the central Abrahamic covenant passages in Gen 15 and 17, as the following table shows:

21:18	cf. 17:20	Ishmael to be made into a great nation
26:24	cf. 15:5	Increase of posterity
28:13,15	cf. 15:7,18	Promise of the land
46:4	cf. 15:16	Return from Egypt

Indeed, in the self-predications contained in those passages ("I am the God of your father Abraham" or slight variations)² the reference to the Abrahamic covenant is explicit, in the light of the formula "your God and the God of your descendants after you" (17:7).

Covenantal elements are no less present in other

¹Dion, CBO 29: 198-206.

²This is lacking, of course, in the revelation of the angel to Hagar in 21:17ff. Neither she nor Ishmael are direct heirs of the special covenant of God with Abraham.

"Fear not" passages of the OT.¹ The recurrent presence of these elements in the "individual complaint" passages, in which the lament precedes the oracular reassurance, suggests that the complaint or lament was perceived as the exercise of the vassal's right to invoke his Suzerain's protection.

If so, the "oracle of salvation" as developed in Israel presupposes and depends on the covenant conception. It is then no wonder that our passage can be related to "salvation oracles" as Kaiser, Westermann, and others did: they both relate to the same covenantal setting.

But if covenant ideas are needed to fully explain the lament in salvation oracles, the converse is not always true. In particular, there is no need to assimilate our passage to a "lament" to explain its form and structure. This conclusion converges, therefore, with Lohfink's: the oracle of salvation is not the master key to the passage.² It also confirms us in the alternative route we followed, determining the unit as a pre-covenantal dialogue.

¹Thus Lam 3:57 is a hope-inspiring memory of God's actions and promises which begins in 3:22; notice the covenantal virtues of love and compassion, and especially "faithfulness" (3:23) towards those who trust in Him (3:25-30, cf. Gen 15:6), and accept His correction for past "rebellions" (3:40ff). Another passage studied by Begrich is the "I am" oracle petitioned for in Ps 35:3 invoking God's righteousness (cf. also Ps 31:1) which cannot be separated from covenant loyalty.

²See structural study above.

Synthesis

In this section we summarize, in a continuous exposition, the gains in our exegetical investigation so far.

Close to the covenantal heart of the Abraham stories, the promisory dialogue of Gen 15:1-6 furnishes the broad outlines of the relationship so introduced and elicits awareness of the momentous importance of its commitments. The establishment, grounds, and consequences of the covenantal relationship are thus explored, culminating in the decisive agreement which sealed the relationship.

The Promisory Oracle (15:1)

God's guidance in the past had been recently demonstrated, once again, in the victory over the four kings; it was "after these events" that "the word of Yahweh came to Abram in a revelation." Hence the opening statement: "Do not be afraid, Abram." There was no need for fear, in spite of the vulnerable position of Abraham as an alien in the land, the brutal culture of the region, or the lack of protection by means of nearby relatives.

The fact that such a message arrived in a nocturnal revelation made the divine promise formal according to ancient conceptions. Since formal covenants always opened with an allusion to a precedent saving history, the message

also reminds Abraham of past salvation as a basis for trusting.

The first move is a simple but powerful statement of the reason for enjoining such confidence: the Lord himself assumes Abraham's covenantal Protectorship, in the role of a munificent Suzerain. The essential functions of such a role, as understood in Abraham's time, are the provision of protection and a grant which rewards the services of the vassal.

While "I am your Protector" is couched in intemporal language, "your reward will be very great" has reference to the future. This is true both of the moment when the reward will be given and of the services it compensates for. A covenantal reward does not consist in a strict compensation for any past service. It is conceived as the position in which a vassal is placed, by the grace of his suzerain, in order to be able to accomplish his duties as his lord's man from that time on. It is not, however, envisioned as a remuneration for any narrowly pre-defined future duty either.

Thus the reward in Abraham's case is constituted by the totality of the privileges of the relationship to which God is calling him, and, therefore, the fulfillment of the promise can be conceived as composed by all ensuing interventions of God in the history of salvation.

Inquiry and Response about
the Promise (15:2-5)

No such clear understanding about the nature of the relationship was then available to the patriarch, however. Abraham is overwhelmed by God's august condescension and generosity, particularly when considering that nothing in his present condition recommends him for such a position. Grants were never bestowed by a suzerain on childless men. Covenants were made for stable relationships between the dynasty of an overlord with the dynasty of an underlord.

The text does not hide his immediate willingness to believe and accept Yahweh for the Suzerain Lord of his life. Nothing would he desire more than such a vassalship: "My Lord Yahweh!" he exclaims.

But the covenant offer implies a relationship extended over generations, and thus it seems unintelligible to the patriarch. The notion of a "perpetual" covenant with an old, childless man is absolutely puzzling: "What will you give me, since I depart barren?" Why he, indeed? If the Lord wanted to initiate a dynasty of special vassals, there was "the chief dependent in my household," namely, "the Damascus citizen Eliezer." The patriarch's life, instead, is a dead end: "Note that you have given me no offspring, and notice that a household dependent is the one who will succeed me."

God deals with the objection by supplying the necessary insight into the future: "No such one will

succeed you, but it is one coming from your own body who will succeed you." But even with the willingness to accept the prophecy, a future so dissonant with the known present may look dim and unreal. Therefore, "He took him outdoors and said: 'Contemplate the skies and enumerate the stars, if you are able to tally them.' Then he told him: 'So shall your offspring be.'"

The Concluding Interaction (15:6)

The offer now became highly significant for Abraham. The offspring promise soothed a deep-seated longing for familial fulfillment. But if deluded, his trust in such a covenant could lead him by dangerous paths. Resolutely, however, he decided to adopt the God who had revealed himself to him for his only "stay and support" in life, the divine Suzerain to whom he would always appeal. "So Abram put his trust in Yahweh."

From God also comes a decision. Here is a man who is not even fully tested, as there is no meaningful way to pre-test such a total life commitment. But God's grace is also decisive: he looked upon Abraham's attitude "and He considered that as uprightness on his part," a fitness for a vassalship with consequences of the utmost importance.

Midrashic Contributions

The previous sections of this chapter offered an exegesis of the passage aided by the resources commonly

employed today. The aim of the present section is to relate those results to the midrashic documents analyzed in the former chapter in accordance with one of the main purposes of this research.

Though our exegetical conclusions could certainly be arrived at independently from the ancient midrashic elaborations, the latter may be cited in relation to multiple aspects of the exegesis here developed.

The elements found relevant to the various tasks of exegesis are presently reviewed according to each document, and then the contributions of the ensemble of documents to each exegetical task is summarized.

Contributions of the Individual Documents

Jubilees has been shown in the former chapter to have a predominant theological interest in the relationship of our passage to the covenant, thus furnishing a clue to what I believe is the proper setting for the passage. It leaves no doubt as to the subject of the accreditation of justice in 15:6, by means of the passive voice for the verb.

Genesis Apocryphon illuminated the events of previous narratives, not as the reason for the fear of Abraham or the grounds for rewarding him, but as a saving history that foreshadows the future under God. We found this to be the probable connection established by 15:1 with

the foregoing material in Genesis, and an important covenantal element.

Someone as early as Philo already conceived of Abraham's believing as trust and reliance, and correctly grasped the exclusive commitment implied. We found that this exclusivity can be related to cultural characteristics of ancient Near East covenants. Philo also understood this trusting attitude to be Abraham's reaction to the opening self-predication of 15:1. We inferred as much from the parallel conformation of the two units in the chapter. Philo leaves no doubt as to Abraham, not God, being credited with righteousness. Modern proposals that reverse the relationship were here found to be seriously flawed.

Josephus underlined the military imagery underlying the description of God's protection over Abraham. Modern scholarship has recognized the appropriateness of such military undertones. In Josephus God is Abraham's "ally," a term with covenantal associations in the Ancient Near East and other passages in Josephus. This helps in categorizing the setting of the passage as pre-covenantal.

The Samaritan Targum revealed the semantic closeness of *šēdāqāh* and *qšth*, helping us to connect the former term with the Assyrian *kinātu*. This in turn throws light on the meaning of the first term in context, through parallels in ancient grant covenants.

Targum Onqelos, by its very parsimony of exegetical

expansions, enhances the significance of the connection between 15:1 and 15:6, which it indicates through the repeated use of *Memra* (itself frequently employed in covenantal passages of this Targum). Its use of *zkwt* to translate *šdqh* shows that it assimilated this concept to that of "personal integrity." This was found to be correct in the light of the historical background of ancient Near East grant covenants.

The Palestinian Targum gathers and confirms several traits of previous documents, as the *Memra* inclusio (strengthened by "believed in the name"), the covenantal associations (suggested by the specification of the holy lineage), and Abraham as a passive recipient of the accreditation of righteousness.

Genesis R. records interesting attempts to determine the meaning of "after these things." We continued these efforts through a study of the contexts for the occurrence of this phrase.

Thus each document studied in the previous chapter was found relevant to an exegetical enterprise conceived in a contemporary way.

Contributions of the Ensemble of Documents

For textual studies

The peculiar distribution of readings among the several documents can be employed to arrive at significant

conclusions. For instance, the conjunctive waw in wškrk is a reading of no indifferent effect. On the basis of its distribution, it can be attributed to Targumic sources. Also, the passive form of the verb in 15:6b has been sometimes attributed to idiosyncrasies of the LXX. Its distribution and association with the insertion "Abraham" in the same verse, however, show that it is not merely Septuagintal or determined by the translational effort into Greek. It merely specified Abraham as the recipient of righteousness in harmony with the understanding of all the ancients.

The excellence of the text contained in the Massoretic, Samaritan, and Greek traditions can be confirmed in our passage. A very ancient, superficially plausible, but clearly secondary reading that compresses the beginning of 15:4 failed to contaminate any of those traditions. The same is valid for the addition "will be my heir," referred to Eliezer, found in 15:2 in Philo and the Palestinian Targum.

Thus, in view of the absence of sufficiently comprehensive critical apparati for the study of the OT, the recourse to midrashic works turns out to be important for textual studies.

For structural studies

Philo and the Jewish Targumim certainly appreciate the relation of 15:1 to 15:6. Philo relates the faith of

Abraham (15:6) to God's invitation to trust in Him as "sole stay and support" in 15:1. The Jewish Targumim express the same connection through the repeated use of "Memra" reserved for these two verses.

Though there is no evidence that these ancient authors diagrammed structural outlines the way we do today, they could certainly have followed the flow of thought in the passage so as to reach the same conclusions. In the former chapter we noted Philo's special attention to thought flow. A structural analysis of the passage, then, can lead us to an increased respect for those ancient exegetes.

For Grammatical and Vocabulary Studies

In the course of this analysis we have found that many of the translational alternatives still contemplated today are represented by some of the ancient midrashic documents. Frequently, too, the majority of those documents coincides with the majority of present translators and commentators. Even more important, the ancient documents exemplify the exegetical consequences of following one or another course of translation.

Thus, in the identification of translational alternatives for 15:1, Gen. R. and the several Targumim can be of help since they represent the various ways in which 'aḥar hadd^ebârim hâ'èlleh are rendered today. We found

that the locution can reasonably be argued to point towards some kind of connection; on the other hand, the Palestinian Targum alerts us to the dangers of speculation in trying to discover too close a connection.

For *mgn*, the ancient translations not only made us aware of a slightly different vocalization of the text but also helped us to reject a suggestion that, though attractive at first sight, obscures the general sense of the text unit.

Ancients and moderns were found to be equally perplexed over the text of 15:2. Contemporary suggestions have done little to clear the difficulty that had not been done already in ancient times.

We also found ourselves coinciding in an euphemism with the Targumim in 15:4, while in 15:6 we rejected, as almost all of the ancient documents do, an interpretation that makes God the object rather than the subject of the imputation of righteousness.

Thus the translational effort of the contemporary interpreter can be aided by recourse to these ancient documents. Exegetically, this ensemble is diverse often at the same points where modern commentators also differ, thus confirming us in the identification of the main exegetical problems in need of concentrated effort.

Limitations

The limitations encountered in the course of research have been already mentioned in our discussion of contributions; they constitute indeed different facets of the same reality.

The study of ancient midrash is no panacea for all exegetical difficulties. For instance, we found the ancients just as perplexed over the text of 15:2 as we still are today. On the other hand, the very fact that a problem is seen as a long-standing one in the ancient documents can warn us against overconfidence in proposing solutions.

Ancient midrash is no unified body of exposition, either. We saw ancient authors differing in many ways. This often occurs at the same spots where modern commentators also diverge. There is, then, no more justification to disregard the first group than there is to discount the second one for the same reason.

Finally, the study of ancient midrashim is not necessarily mandatory. As already noted, valid exegetical conclusions could conceivably be arrived at independently from the ancient midrashic elaborations. However, the same might be said of any particular task of exegesis, and we know that neglecting any of them certainly compromises the result. A good pianist could probably draw some music from an instrument with a few defective keys. But we would be

hard pressed to find a professional willing to perform on such a keyboard. In the same way, ignoring these ancient interpreters would impoverish our exegesis without a good justification.

Conclusion

We can conclude, then, that the diverse tasks of exegesis have been profitably aided by these ancient documents. They have not determined our conclusions, nor could they have so done, in view of their wide-ranging diversity. For the same reason they could probably be of help to other exegetes even if they reach different conclusions. The point, however, is that they were found to be fully valid interlocutors in an exegetical dialogue. Thus these documents can only be ignored to the interpreter's disadvantage.

We were thus able to confirm, as far as Gen 15:1-6 is concerned, the statement that G. Vermes made in general about the whole OT:

Interpreters of the Hebrew Bible cannot fail to benefit from the work of their predecessors in antiquity. Not only will they discover which biblical texts were thought to demand particular interpretation: they will also notice that the midrashist's problems often coincide with their own, and may be surprised to see that 'modern' solutions to scriptural difficulties are not infrequently foreshadowed in these ancient writings.¹

¹Ackroyd and F. Evans, eds., Cambridge Hist. of the Bible, 1:288.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of ancient midrashim on Genesis 15:1-6 helped to identify exegetical difficulties and suggested possible solutions for them. An independent exegetical study then confirmed the validity of the questions posed by the ancient documents and, in some cases, also their solutions.

While no two ancient documents here examined were found to contain identical interpretations, their variety was found not to be a random one. There is evidence of the relatedness of these interpretations, as well as of their progression over time. These findings are relevant to historical studies on the Judaism of the period.

The solutions here proposed for exegetical difficulties have natural implications in the theological realm. The fact that some of these solutions go back to ancient times should increase their appeal.

Since in former chapters a detailed list of conclusions for the research on ancient and modern exegesis of Gen 15:1-6 has been already provided, only a brief summary of findings appears here. Afterwards, the historically and theologically most significant implications of the research are compiled.

Summary of Findings

Promisory Oracle (15:1)

Connection with the foregoing context

Modern commentators are not yet agreed on the connection between Gen 15 and the foregoing chapter, an issue debated already in antiquity. It was here studied structurally and terminologically, following the lead of Rabbinical midrash, with results leaning towards an actual connection. The passage exhibits many of the traits associated with preliminary negotiations for grant covenants, suggesting that the foregoing chapters constitute the "saving history" on which the covenant is built.

The mention of fear

The fear Abraham is enjoined to abandon should be related not to childlessness, battle aftermaths, or psychological moods, but to the general vulnerability of Abraham in a foreign land, from which God as his Suzerain will now protect him.

The mention of reward

The reward of Abraham is not a retribution for particular deeds of his but God's grant in the covenant relationship, soon to be actualized in the gift of the land.

Inquiry and Response on
the Promise (15:2-5)

The point in Abraham's
question

As ancient documents already understood, the question of Abraham, "What will you give me?" was elicited by the meaninglessness of the covenantal offer in the absence of prospective heirs. Sociological data on ancient covenants support this ancient understanding.

The function of the
offspring promise

Many modern commentators assume that the promise of offspring is the main point of the whole pericope. It was found best to relate this promise to the covenantal grant and understand the latter as the main point of the pericope. The promise of posterity came as God's reaction to Abraham's puzzlement over a divine offer of a grant covenant in the absence of prospective heirs.

The Concluding Interaction (15:6)

The subject of the crediting
action

The most revolutionary reinterpretation of this passage is the one recently revived from a twelfth-century Jewish commentator by scholars such as Gaston and Oeming. According to this interpretation, the passage presents Abraham crediting God with righteousness. However, ancient documents were found to unanimously understand the

attribution of justice as God's act in favor of Abraham. Several documents and ancient versions express this attribution through a passive verb so as to leave no doubt about who was attributing justice to whom.

In line with these documents, a consistent application of results from the exegesis of the former verses leads to the recognition of a link between the concluding interaction and the opening offer. The linkage of 15:6 with 15:1 identifies Abraham's trust, not God's promise of descendants, as that which was taken for the grounds of the crediting action. This implies that Abraham, not God, is the one credited with righteousness.

Righteousness: God's
or Abraham's

It has also been suggested that righteousness would in any case be God's righteous action and not Abraham's status before God. Besides being problematic from a grammatical viewpoint, this position completely ignores the covenantal associations of the passage, in which an evaluation of the vassal by the suzerain is expected.

Thus, the results of the present research tend to show that the oldest attested understanding of the passage, as reflected, e.g., in the LXX, is basically sound. That which was offered was a covenantal protective and saving bond, accepted by Abraham in trusting God's guidance and salvation, then followed by God's evaluation of his brand-

new vassal's attitude as an evidence of fitness for the relationship.

Historical Implications

For the history of the interpretation of the passage, the varying emphasis given its several verses by the ancient documents is important. Most exegetical expansions tend to accumulate at the beginning rather than at the end of the pericope. These expansions concentrate on diverse concerns.

In one group of documents (Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, literal Targums), i.e., the earlier Palestinian ones, the stress falls on God's self-revelation. This includes concerns with both the character or time of the revelation, and with God's guidance and protection. The documents emphasize (especially in the Targums) the prophetic and (in Jubilees) the covenantal character of the oracle, as well as its relationship to the already accomplished welfare of Abraham (in Genesis Apocryphon).

In another group of documents, the later Palestinian ones (Palestinian Targum, Genesis R.), by way of contrast, stress is placed on the personal-eschatological reward of Abraham as commensurate to his good works. These documents, however, do preserve many of the interpretive elements found in the earlier ones.

The Hellenistic documents are more difficult to assess, since the Philonian corpus is defective and

Josephus writes for an audience unfamiliar with nomistic rewards. That which remains does indicate, however, an incipient emphasis on good works and their reward.

This shift in the history of the interpretation of the passage can be traced through the equivalents given to *mgn*. While in the earlier documents this is a personal title, in harmony with the suzerain-covenantal character of the passage, it becomes progressively the name of an artifact (Palestinian Targum, Massoretic punctuation of the Hebrew text) and an adjunct to God's reward (Genesis R.). Thus while the stress on God's protectorship stagnates or decreases, the role of Abraham in securing for himself a magnificent reward increases in parallel course. The latter emphasis, too, finally ebbs away, as evidenced in dissenting voices recorded in Genesis R. and later midrash, but in the process God's offer of suzerainty in the passage has been obscured.

Future research might, then, attempt to correlate the shift towards nomistic rewards and back towards unconditional rewards with events from Early Tannaitic to Amoraic times.¹ Such research should certainly include much more than "reward" passages. However, the present findings imply that midrashic documents, including their treatment of Gen 15:1-6, need no longer be ignored in a

¹J. Neusner rightly emphasizes the need for this kind of correlation when studying the evolution of exegeses in Comp. Midrash, pp. 198 ff.

discussion of Jewish soteriology near the turn of the era.

They should especially not be ignored on the grounds of uncertainty about document dates. While the uncertainty is real for some manuscripts or their enclosed recensions, enough datable material is available in these documents or in other works related to them by content so as to follow the main thrust of the history of the exegesis of the relevant Biblical passages.

The shift here observed in early Tannaitic times agrees with observations drawn from a wider basis in the Apocrypha:

Im Zusammenhang damit [das noch ungeschriebene Gesetz] vertauschen dann einige Texte die Relation von Verheissung und Gesetz: Abraham ist nicht mehr nur der, der als Verheissungsträger idealer Gerechter war und das Gesetz gehalten hat, sondern hier findet sich auch die Darstellung, dass ihm die Verheissung zuteil geworden ist, weil er das Gesetz gehalten bzw. die Versuchung(en) bestanden hat.¹

Since it is well known that the Law had been the rallying point of the nation in the Maccabean crisis,² one could inquire whether eschatological salvation, which figures so prominently in the apocalypticism of the period,

¹H. H. Schmid, "Gerechtigkeit und Glaube: Genesis 15:1-6 und sein biblischer-theologischer Kontext" in Evangelische Theologie 40 (1980): 413. He quotes as evidence, not only Josephus, but also Sirach and 1 Maccabees.

²For the historical necessity of nomism after the Maccabean crisis, see, e.g., M. Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, 1:308 and the discussion therein summarized.

was then firmly incorporated into a nomistic theology.¹

Additionally, since Judaism, once safely established in the last part of the Second Temple period, confronted as a religion no collective enemies, both internal² and external³ factors can be invoked to account for the refocusing of the doctrine of Law-keeping on the personal, day-by-day plane aiming at greater commitment on the part of the individual Jew. This would explain the particularistic emphasis on "weighing deeds."

After the destruction of the Second Temple and the failure of the revolt under Hadrian, with the subsequent persecutions and dispersal, however, it is reasonable to surmise that synagogue-attending Jews were likely to be committed enough by this very fact.

If this reconstruction is substantiated, then one

¹For the association of apocalypticism with rigorous halakah, see *ibid.*, 2: 118 n. 462.

²Among such internal factors one could cite the sectarian strife that characterized the epoch and the laxity in religious observance among certain sectors of the population that plagues every Landkirch. Such could be, e.g., the 'am ha'ares. See "ochlos" in *TDNT* 5: 589. The ideas of weighing deeds could, in those circumstances, have prodded the individual into greater commitment.

³The external factors include the individualism and rationalism that permeated Hellenistic times, even in circles with a strong reaction against Hellenism. For the individualism of Hellenistic times, see Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* 1: 116-7, 195, 202. Hellenism, Hengel writes, influenced Judaism with its "strong rational element which found expression, among other things, in an almost arithmetical idea of reward and in the Torah ontology" (*ibid.*, 1:308).

could posit that in those circumstances the need for assurance of covenantal salvation could have taken precedence over introspective musings about individual attainments in the teaching of the Rabbis. Such an hypothesis might explain the diminished emphasis on the ideas of weighing deeds after the end of the Second Temple period.

No matter what results are gained in such an investigation, one should not lose view of the fact that the soteriological ideas that waxed and waned as just described were related to only one of several strands of exegesis on the Abraham narratives. Other strands, present side by side, emphasized the free grace of God in choosing Abraham and the independence of the promises in regards to the Law.¹

Theological Implications

From a theological viewpoint, the revaluation of the opening self-revelation as the key to the whole passage is highly significant. It tends to give back to this passage all its intended importance as the first in "the book of beginnings" to record a self-disclosing revelation of God and His dealings with the elect.

The fact is also meaningful that the connection of the passage with its context shows that the protectorship

¹Schmid, EvTh 40: 413.

of God was manifest as a "saving history" throughout the life of Abraham.

Among important points found in the course of research are that both ancient and modern interpreters have recognized the theological link between 15:1 and 15:6, and that Near Eastern suzerainty treaties may illumine and clarify the sense of the theological terminology employed in the passage.

No quandaries about the sources or redactional history of this passage should prevent our placing it within a covenantal frame, which in turn allows connections to be made with the rich theme of covenant as developed in other parts of Scripture. This covenantal setting, determined with the aid of both biblical and extra-biblical data, provides us with a useful hermeneutical tool for an interpretation of theological concepts such as the "reward," "faith," and "accreditation of righteousness."

The "reward" then emerges as the whole of the grant bestowed on Abraham, which remains open to all the blessings of scriptural salvation history, the "faith" of Abraham as the necessary counterpart to covenantal protection expressed in exclusive trust in Yahweh, and the attribution of "uprightness" as an evaluation, concomitant to the same relationship, oriented towards the future and involving no mere *quid pro quo*.

It is hoped that this historical and exegetico-historical basis for understanding the passage can appeal to a wide range of interpreters. The retrieval of the precise nuances of those terms in their historical circumstances may even dispel the tendency to read confessional theology too readily into them. This, in turn, should help to avoid doctrinaire interpretations.

Beyond all these academic implications, the voice of the passage still needs to be heard in our times. When its message comes through, it is capable of striking responsive chords in every human heart. It sets forth a Powerful Protector who is not an exploiter,¹ an evolving relationship that does not turn sour, and the values of trust and friendship projected on the plane of the relationship of God and man. Thus, its promises stand in their pristine purity when its atmosphere is recaptured by careful historical reconstruction.

The appeal to the reader is strengthened by the prolongation of this relationship through an "offspring" (15:4,5) in which the great monotheistic faiths see themselves alluded. Thus, the noble ideals presented in Gen 15:1-6 could inspire them to use power charitably, to affirm life and happiness, and to firmly resolve to keep faith and loyalty towards their common God and fellow man.

¹Promises of protection have often been made into a tool of power politics, as in the nets of "Protectorships" on which certain empires have been built.

APPENDIX

INTERPRETIVE AFFINITIES OF THE MIDRASHIC DOCUMENTS FOR GENESIS 15:1-6

The purpose of this appendix is to show, on the basis of agreements and disagreements in interpretation, how the midrashic documents could be meaningfully grouped for the history of the exegesis of Gen 15:1-6. Because of its statistical nature, this group determination has been relegated to an appendix so as not to encumber the more articulate discourse in the main body of research.

For this analysis, the consonantal text of Gen 15:1-6 has been divided in as many sections as practical to show agreements or disagreements between the various documents. A synoptic table of interpretations is then keyed to this division (by means of A., B., C., etc.).

- A. 'ḥr hdbrym h'lh
- B. ḥyh dbr YHWH 'l 'brm bḥḥzh
- C. l'mr 'l tyr' 'brm
- D. 'nky mgn lk
- E. škrk hrbh m'd
- F. wy'mr 'brm 'dny YHWH mh ttn ly
- G. w'nky hlk 'ryry
- H. wbn mšq byty hw' dmsq 'ly^czr
- I. wy'mr 'brm hn ly l' ntth zr^c whnh bn byty yyrš 'ty
- J. whnh dbr YHWH 'lyw l'mr
- K. l' yyršk zh ky 'm 'šr ys' mm^cyk hw' yyršk
- L. wys' 'tw ḥḥwš wy'mr hbt n' ḥšmymh wspr hkwbym
- M. 'm twkl lspr 'tm wy'mr lw kh yhyh zr^ck
- N. wh'mn bYHWH
- O. wyḥšbh lw šdqh









SYNOPTIC TABLE OF INTERPRETIVE FEATURES

	1. Jub	2. 1depG	3. Philo	4. Jos.	5. STg	6. TgO	7. PTg	8. GenR
A.	chronol. expansion (scheme)	chronol. expansion (10 years)	[missing]		chronol. ("in due time")		expansion (reasons for fear)	reasons for fear
B.	dream	vision	[missing]	omitted	prophecy	prophecy	prophecy	
C.			[missing]	omitted			loss of eschatol. reward	loss of eschatol. reward
D.	defender	support & strength	[missing]	[Gen 22: support & strength]	strength	strength	shield	gift
E.		'skrn? wealth	<u>visio</u> <u>beatifica</u>	in no way loose <u>eu-</u> <u>pragiai</u>	I will increase		for good works in next world	in next world
F.		why will You give me?	what else /in fact you give	what is the point in giving?	what else /in fact you give			
G.	going on	die empty, childless		(com- pressed)			empty and childless	
H.	Masek		Masek	(compr.)			Eliezer= wonders	Eliezer= wonders
I.			transp.+ insertion	(compr.)			transp.+ insertion	
J.	omission	omission						
K.	belly	[missing]		(compr.)	loins	beget	belly	
L.		[missing]	incorporeals	(compr.)				
M.	insertion	[missing]	brightness, order	number of stars			offspring of son	
N.		[missing]	in God only	omission			+ Abram	
O.	passive	[missing]	passive	omission	active <u>gth</u>	active <u>lzkw</u>	passive <u>lzkw</u>	

From the information contained in the foregoing synoptic table one can derive sets of agreements (=) or disagreements (/) in interpretation. In the following list the documents are identified by Arabic numerals keyed to the synoptic table (1=Jub; 2=1QapGen; etc.):

- A. 1=2; 5/7; 7=8
- B. 1/5=6=7
- C. 7=8
- D. 1=2=4=5=6/7/8
- E. 1=2; 2/3; 4=7; 7=8
- F. 2=4; 3=5
- G. 1/2; 2=7
- H. 1=3; 7=8
- I. 3=7
- J. 1=2
- K. 5/6/7=1
- L. (insufficient data)
- M. 3/4
- N. (insufficient data)
- O. 1=3=7/5=6

From this list agreements and disagreements between documents paired in all possible ways are summarized in the following graphic:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
		1			2	2	2	1	upper right half:
1	4		1				1	1	DISAGREEMENTS
2	2			1	1	1			
3	1	2					1	1	
4	1	1	1	1		1	4	1	
5	1	1		1	3		3	1	
6	2	1	2	1		1		1	
7							4		
8									

lower left half:

AGREEMENTS

From the preceding graphic the strongest interpretive concurrence between documents is discernable:

Jub: 1QapGen, 4 counts of agreements
 PTg: Gen. R., 4 counts of agreements
 STg: TgO, 3 counts of agreements

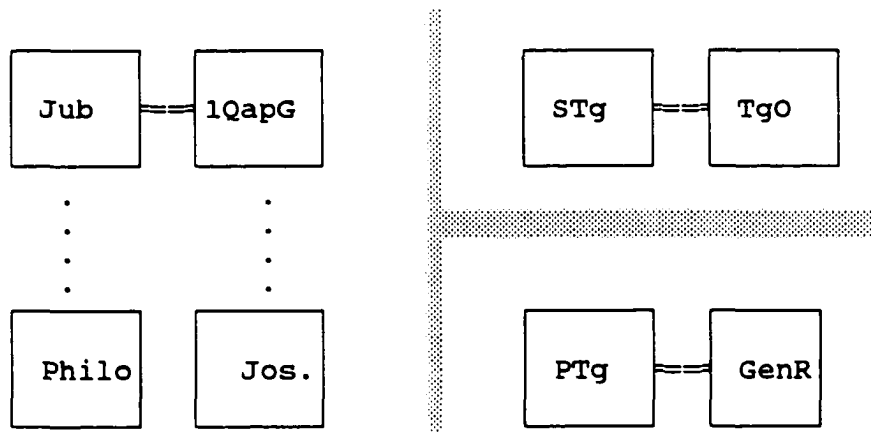
The pairs Jub: Philo, Jub: PTg, 1QapGen: Jos, and Philo: PTg are weaker in affinities (2 counts each).

The strongest oppositions are as follows:

STg: PTg, 4 counts of disagreement
 TgO: PTg, 3 counts of disagreement

The pairs Jub: STg, Jub: TgO, and Jub: PTg show two disagreement apiece.

From this evidence, it seems advisable to group the documents here studied from the viewpoint of interpretive affinities as in the graphic which follows, where (==) symbolizes strong affinity, (. . .) weak affinity and (⊖) opposition:



In this study the literal Targumim emerge as a natural group. The Palestinian Targum and Genesis Rabbah, which might be called "expansive midrash" (by opposition to the former), constitute another natural pair, as does Jubilees and the Genesis Apocryphon. The latter pair might be termed "apocryphal midrash." In contrast, the Hellenistic documents do not constitute a coherent pair, with little or no internal affinity and very weak affinities to other groups. Additional research could try to ascertain whether this group determination holds true for other passages, and the Pentateuch as a whole, as well.

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